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OF

# THE THEOLOGY OF KARL BARTH

BY

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FOREWORD BY

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## FOREWORD

A PROPHET may be defined as one who has so heard the voice of God that the message he is constrained to utter is the 'Word of the Lord'. Under this definition, Karl Barth is indeed the prophet of our day. He never ceases to declare with conviction that the movement associated with his name is none of his doing. Again and again he warns his friends against trying to explain away his words. Everything, he says, has been quickened and moved by God and God alone. Further, Barth denies that he is trying to establish a new school of Theology, or to re-interpret for this age the values of the past. His teaching is 'a moment in a moment' and it is as impossible to define it as it is to describe flight by taking a photograph of a bird on the wing.

Nevertheless, Barth himself is the best argument against his own warning. He has set light to such a fire that the Christian world at large must take notice. Even in this country, his name is so often heard that some account of him is necessary. Most of his writings are beyond the comprehension and the purse of the majority. Hence, Mr. Martin, while fully aware of Barth's warning, has felt constrained to write this simple introduction to the message of Karl Barth. All who read it will recognise that the author has done a very timely and useful piece of work.

I have called Barth a prophet. Whatever else a prophet may be, he is first of all a man of his own time and can only be understood against the background of the thought and conditions of his own time and place. This consideration may perhaps meet the unspoken question of many Indian Christians who

read this book—‘What have these ideas and references to do with our conditions and problems?’ To understand Barth at all, it is first necessary to read his ideas against the background of the whole theological position of modern Europe, which has its roots in Barth’s own country of Germany. It may well be that when Barth is thus studied, the reader will find that the ultimate things of the soul are not fundamentally different in any place. To put it another way Barth says that his theology is radically one of correction. We must see what it is he seeks to correct. If Barth be a true prophet, he will be a man not only of his own time and place, but of all times and places. If his correction is true, it will have meaning for our own error and false emphasis.

Canon Peter Green of Manchester has recently pointed out in a short estimate of the ideas of Karl Barth (a masterpiece of clarity and compression) published in the *Manchester Guardian*, that the natural antitheses in the theology are no longer Catholic and Protestant. For over a century, the real issue has lain between the ‘theological’ and the ‘modern’ mind, or as Barth himself would put it, between the ‘Word of God’ and the ‘Word of Man’. Three factors have gone to the creation of the ‘modern spirit’; the Kantian philosophy; the critical attitude to the Bible; and the theories associated with the name of Darwin. While the ‘modern spirit’ eludes definition, many of its characteristics are clear. The late Rev. J. Arundel Chapman sums it up thus: ‘By the modern spirit is meant, among other things, emphasis on the immanence of God, a minimising of what separates man from God, a tendency to monism, the acceptance of evolution without any clear perception that evolution has become the problem, a cheerful belief in progress, the stress laid on time to the exclusion of eternity, the partial loss of the note of righteousness, light and Pelagian views of sin, and following on these last two,

easy doctrines of Atonement which make old theories sound strange in our ears.'

With all these varied reactions of the 'modern mind' to Theology, Karl Barth joins issue. For him, God is transcendent, eternal, righteous. Man is fallen and unable to rise; over him hangs judgement. Redemption is possible only by the grace of God. God is all; man is nothing. From these premises, Barth deduces his theology of correction. As we read his words, often hard to understand, we shall do well to remember that they are no mere academic quibbles. Barth is first and foremost a preacher and pastor. He did not sit down to create a new theology; but as he sought to speak the word of God to the ordinary man in trouble and need, he heard God speak. As a preacher, he found himself lifted into the chair of a professor.

Canon Green points out that there are three fundamental points in Barth's theological system. These I will mention in bringing this introduction to a close.

(a) Much modern Christology is based on the idea of the 'community of nature between God and man'. Barth is relentless in his condemnation of this idea of divinity in man. It is not true that a spark disturbs our clay and that Jesus is a man in whom the divine fire burns most clearly. Jesus is not the climax of the reaching of man to God. He comes from God to man. He is the Word become flesh, God in man.

(b) From this it follows that the gulf between God and man cannot be crossed from man's side. God alone can cross to man. Man cannot reach God by his own efforts, he can only await the grace of God which will bridge the gulf. Religion is not the way in which man finds God. Christianity is God's word to man, but other religions are only man's cry for God.

(c) Sin is not a veiling of the divine fire naturally in man. It is the overt sign of the depravity of human

nature. Grace alone can cure this. Man cannot grow better; he must be re-born.

These few words are enough to show the tendency of Barth's teaching. Many will probably say that there is exaggeration on one side and neglect of facts on the other. But who can doubt the justification of this correction in the present day, when in spite of bitter experience of the vanity of human striving for goodness, man still thinks so pridefully of himself?

At the risk of appearing presumptuous, I would commend very warmly this able introduction to the study of the theology of Karl Barth to the Christian people of India. The writer has read widely and critically in the increasing corpus of Barthian literature. But he possesses in addition to knowledge of Barth, that pre-eminent qualification for writing about any man—the consciousness of a debt to him. I feel that I am rightly interpreting the wish of the author when I say that he will feel his labour has not been in vain if it leads his readers to follow up their introduction by learning from Barth himself.

MARCUS WARD

ROYAPETTAH, MADRAS,

*February 14th, 1935.*

## AUTHOR'S PREFACE

IN August 1918, there arose a great stir amongst the Christian theologians of Germany and Switzerland. The occasion was the publication of Karl Barth's Commentary on Paul's Epistle to the Romans. Previous to that time, his name was practically unknown except in the local church where he was minister, but within the space of a few years, his name was not only upon the lips of all Christian leaders in Europe, but his books were discussed with great eagerness in the British Isles, America and Australia, by all interested in Christian thought. Not only so, but even amongst the students in Christian Colleges in Asia and Africa, his name was known, and his theology a subject of serious enquiry.

Though Barth himself is of Swiss-German origin, the Barthian theology is as universal in its outlook as the Christian Church is universal in its essence. It undoubtedly has a message of great importance for every country and for every section of the Christian Church, but that message needs to be related in detail to each country according to its religious life and outlook. In a valuable book published in 1933, entitled *The Barthian Theology* and to which I am greatly indebted in the writing of this book, Dr. McConnachie says 'The time is arriving when each country must endeavour to translate the message of Karl Barth into its own modes of thought, and to acclimatise it to its own speech. No doubt, God has been preparing the different lands for this fresh presentation of His Word.'

The importance of this task can be doubted by no one who cares to read the estimates of Karl Barth and of his work, by religious leaders of western countries. 'He has saved Protestantism in Germany' says one.

'He has captured the attention of the Churches of Europe' says another. 'He has blown the first bugle notes of his reveille. People looked up and listened. To-day, it has sounded around the world' says yet another.

Karl Barth has been described by those who know him personally as 'a young Luther' and as 'a great volcanic soul'. When he first went to Bonn in Germany in 1929 as Professor of Theology in the University, there were 180 theological students. In his first term, the number rose to 350 from all countries of Europe. It has also been estimated that more than half of the theological students of Germany are his disciples. Amazing tributes have been paid to the movement which arose out of the publication of the Commentary on Romans and other writings of his, and of his disciples. It has been described as 'The greatest spiritual movement of the century', as 'working with stimulating results upon the life of the European Christian Church'. Heineman has called it 'one of the greatest manifestations of Protestantism'. 'The future of Protestantism lies with this group' says another.

A man and a movement, so strikingly spoken about in the West, and dealing as they do, with the ever vital and fundamental question of man and God, may surely demand a hearing in India, where this question has been the foremost influence in its civilization and life, and where the search for God has been man's foremost quest. 'The theology of Barth,' writes McConnachie 'is being eagerly studied by Christian students in Japan. Canada is opening her doors. America has begun to listen'. But in India, as far as I have been able to discover, up to the present, no book on the man or the movement has been published, either in English or any of the vernaculars. It is true that English translations of some of Barth's books, lectures in English by Brunner, one of the

chief disciples of Barth, and books on the movement by English and Scottish writers have been on sale. Moreover, lectures in English have occasionally been delivered to English audiences in the larger towns, and occasional study groups have been held. But I think that it is generally true to say that although the movement originated some 16 years ago, its influence has hardly as yet touched this great land of India, and its literature has not yet been made available in a suitable form for the generality of the Indian Church. The books available in English are only suitable for those who know English well and have had a fair theological training. The present book aims at providing an introduction to the study of Karl Barth to those whose English is not good enough to follow easily the admittedly difficult English books, and to those who have not had a full theological course.

I claim no special qualification for this task of presenting some of the main points of Barth's message to Indian Christians. I am fully conscious of the difficulty of the task, but if Barth is ever to be introduced to Indian Christians, some one must make a beginning. The very inadequacy of this attempt may perhaps stimulate someone more qualified than myself both by knowledge and understanding of Barth and of India, to undertake it more thoroughly. This book, therefore, is intended to be an introduction only, especially for pastors, catechists, ministers and teachers, engaged in Christian work, who are unable to profit by a study of the English books upon the subject. A brief but not complete list of the main English books available is printed as an appendix.

To any one who knows the English literature upon Barth's theology, my indebtedness to it in the writing of this book will be obvious. More especially have I drawn upon the writings of Dr. McConnachie whose several books have been of great value in presenting Barth's message in a simple form. This message has

been of great value to me as I have studied it, and it is with the hope that it may prove of value to others that I send forth this book.

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S. INDIA

H. V. MARTIN

*Note.*—As this book goes to Press, messages from Germany indicate that Karl Barth has been forced to resign from his chair of Theology at Bonn, by the Nazi Government of Germany, because of his refusal to swear the necessary oath of allegiance without a conscience clause.—Author.

## INTRODUCTION

THAT the happiness, welfare and progress of man depends upon his relationship to and fellowship with God, is a statement that probably only an atheist or a materialist would deny. Religion, that is, the phase of man's activity and thought which deals with God, is a universal phenomenon in the world of man in all ages. The search after God has been the most powerful force in determining the world of man as it is today. The claim of all religions fundamentally is that they are a way to God, and that union with God, in some way or the other, is the great goal of life, and the meaning of existence.

Christianity also preaches unity with God. In Christ's great prayer (John xvii.) before His betrayal and crucifixion, among the many things for which Christ might have prayed, He chose to pray particularly for the unity or oneness of men with God. 'That they may be one in us'. St. Paul also stresses this as the essence of the Christian life 'United with Christ'.

In order, however, to be in any sense 'united with God' we must understand three things truly :

1. The nature of God and the nature of Man.
2. The character of God and the character of Man.
3. The activity of God and the activity of Man.

From these three points, there arise three great questions :

1. What is the nature of God in relation to Man ?
2. What is the character of God in His dealings with Man ?
3. What is the will of God in His purpose for Man ?

To these three fundamental questions, Karl Barth suggests answers which challenge our investigation and consideration. These questions are not merely questions of abstract theology but questions to which all

those engaged in Christian service must have some adequate reply, if their service is to be fruitful. The message of Barth, even though it be only a 'question mark in the margin' has immense practical consequences for every man, Christian and non-Christian. It sets him in the Krisis where he is forced to judge himself in the light of the Word of God to him. The Barthian message again applies especially to those called to proclaim the Christian message, whether as teachers or preachers. The Barthian theology was born, not in the study, apart from the practical difficulties of the preacher. It was born in the pulpit, in the front line of the Christian warfare, where Barth himself was forced to face the great realities of Christianity. As Barth ministered to a Christian congregation Sunday by Sunday, he was forced to ask himself the question whether he was preaching a message of man or a message of God. His previous theological training he found to be of little use to him in this difficulty. So he turned to the study of the Bible, and there he found, as he tells us, 'a strange new world'. In that new world of the Bible, he saw men and women, stopping, listening, looking up. To them there came a Word of God, from beyond, from outside of them, a word which was not a word of the wisdom of man, not a knowledge which they themselves could discover, but a direct personal word which came upon them with force and power, to which they surrendered and obeyed, as for their very lives. To Abraham there came 'Get thee out of thy country'. To Moses 'Come now, I will send thee unto Pharaoh that thou mayest bring forth my people'. To Gideon 'Go in this thy might and thou shalt save Israel'. He saw an Elijah, who at the Word of God, alone defied the enmity of the king, an Isaiah pronouncing a divine blessing, a Jeremiah, wishing not to speak, yet by the Word of God, compelled to pronounce divine judgement upon his own people and country. He saw moreover one

incomparably greater than all the prophets, Who spake with authority, Who called 'Follow me,' through Whose whole being there peals one great triumphant note 'I am the resurrection and the life. Because I live, ye shall live also'. He saw, too, the small band of disciples, listening, waiting, watching, hearing, and then going forth with witness to a divine word, preaching the coming of the new world.

Yet when he compared this world of the Bible with the world around him, he saw little of this looking and watching and listening. He heard none with a Word of God upon his lips. The ministers of the churches were preaching, but there was little or nothing of the authority of the Word of God in their utterances, no witness, no power, no urgency, no Krisis. He saw the Church concerned with social uplift, industrial institutions and social centres, stressing form, music, liturgy and buildings. He saw ministers of the Church discoursing Sunday by Sunday upon morality, culture, politics and religion in general, but no proclaiming of a Word of God, of judgement and grace. Thereby, the churches were rapidly losing ground, and congregations were rapidly diminishing.

In Christian thought, there was a conflict of Christian theology with science, philosophy, and psychology. The old securities were gone. The old basis of authority, namely the Bible, in its literal sense as a book of divine commands and inerrant truth, had been undermined and to a large extent rejected. In its place, authority had been given to experience and to human reason. Man was made the measure of all things. In him was God immanent. By self-realisation, he could rise to be as God Himself.

But Barth found no satisfaction, nor firm resting place for his feet in this kind of theology. To him it was all relative, all subjective. This theology with man at its centre was no longer theology but anthropology. God was no longer God but man writ large. God was

turned out all together and the Other, the Beyond, the New World was denied. Barth, finding this contrary to that new world which he had discovered in the Bible, and perceiving that this kind of theology left man walking in a circle, set forth his first great principle that 'The finite is not capable of the infinite'. i.e., 'man is not capable of God.'

'You cannot speak of God simply by speaking of man in a loud voice' says Barth. We have to realise that between man and God, there is a difference not just of degree, but of kind; not just of quantity but of quality. Between the two, there is a great gulf, a great barrier, an unscalable cliff. Man is man, whether good or bad. God is God. Man is here, God is there. Man is this side, God is that side, over against us. Man is in the world of time and things. God is in the world of non-time, i.e., of eternity. Thus man's attempt to rise to God, to become as God, judge and ruler and controller of his own life and destiny, is for ever vain. God stands over against all such efforts, which are compared to the building of the tower of Babel to reach up to heaven. If man and God are to meet, the approach must be from the side of God. He must throw out the bridge, He must dig the tunnel, He must let down the rope. That He has done so in Jesus Christ, the Word of God, is the distinctive message of Christianity against that of all other religions which say that man can rise to God. Christianity, then, is not so much a Religion, as a Revelation. Religion is the attempted movement of man to God. Revelation is the actual movement of God to man. The question then arose in Barth's mind 'How does God reveal Himself to man'? The answer of the Bible and of the Reformers is 'Only through the Word of God'. How then does the Word of God come to man? It comes in various ways, as seen in the Bible and in the experience of the Christian Church, but whenever it comes, it always sets man, his work, his efforts

and his desires in a Krisis. Krisis means a situation which comes upon a man, and in which he is personally involved, and where he is compelled to choose, to make a decision, for himself and affecting himself. Because this idea of Krisis is so prominent in the thought of Barth, his theology has often been called 'The Theology of Krisis'.<sup>1</sup>

According to Barth, the word of God comes forth and sets in the Krisis, firstly *Human Civilization*. Man in spite of all his noble virtues, refuses to acknowledge himself as lost and fallen, as dependent, and as relative, and considers himself as the centre of the universe. His welfare, his progress, his glory is, in this civilization, seen to be the chief end and the aim of existence. Man makes himself as God. This to Barth, is the crowning sin of man, for which he is condemned in the time of Krisis of the coming of the Word of God. Secondly the word of God sets the *Church of Christ* in the Krisis. The Church is seen to have become largely unfaithful to its calling. Christianity has tended to become just one religion among many. The Church has become proud, seeking a name for itself, eager after earthly power and glory, and no longer speaks with authority, the authority of the Word of God. It also is condemned in the Krisis. Thirdly, the Word of God sets the *Ministers of the Church* in

#### NOTES ON KRISIS

<sup>1</sup> 'Crisis' is the English transliteration on the Greek word *κρίσις*. From the same root come the English words 'critic, critical, criticism, etc'. Crisis in its primary meaning is 'judgement' but it also has the secondary meaning of 'turning point', as in the 'crisis of a sickness'. Barth's theology is a theology of Krisis in both senses. It is critical, passing judgement upon existing systems of theology and man's attempts to reach God. It also sets the Present Age and all who live in it, in a Crisis, which by the reaction to the Word of God, becomes a 'turning point' for better or worse, for life or death. See Biblical references.

1. Hebrews ix. 27. Judgement (to come).

2. 2 Peter ii. 11. Accusation.

3. John xii. 31. Judgement (turning point).

the Krisis. They above all others who ought to have been proclaiming the Word of God, are found only too often proclaiming a word of men. They speak with no authority, save that of human wisdom and knowledge. They make the Bible just one book among many. They tend to make Jesus a mere man, a religious teacher who was limited by the ignorance of His day, but taught good moral precepts. His message of redemption has been turned into a programme of social and political uplift. The ministers of the Church also thereby fall under the judgement of the Krisis. Fourthly, the Word of God sets *Christian Theology* in the Krisis. The falseness of Christian theology is the root cause of the failure of the ministers of the Church, of the Church itself, and of human civilization. Christian theology, rejecting the Word of God as its sole and primary authority of absolute value, has based itself upon human reason, human experience, history and philosophy and psychology, and thus can speak with no word of absolute authority. The result is chaos and Krisis.

Accordingly Barth's great purpose is to bring Christian theology back to be a theology of the Word of God. We must not continue to start with man and try to build upwards to God. God is not what man thinks of Him, nor even what man thinks He ought to be. By that process, we only arrive at the different gods of world religions, but not at the true God. We must start from God, what He is, what He does, what He wills. Man again is not what he himself thinks he is, but what God thinks he is. Therefore, we must be like the men of the Bible, watching, looking up, waiting, listening, until the Word of God comes to us in Revelation and Krisis. This Word of God, as it speaks about God and man, is the true subject matter of Christian theology.

## CHAPTER I

### CHRISTIANITY AND WORLD RELIGIONS

RELIGION is a universal phenomenon in the world of man. In every country and in every race, now, and as far back as we can trace, man has bowed down before the unseen, has performed acts of worship, has expressed religious beliefs. In the dawn of history, primitive tribes the world over developed animistic beliefs, offered sacrifices to believed-in deities, and built idol-shrines for worship. In the more advanced civilizations of Egypt, Assyria, India and China, regular systems of religion can be traced from the earliest times known. Gradually these great religions rose and fell with the rise and fall of the great empires, Greece, Assyria, Rome, Judea, Persia. In India, the Vedic nature religion gave place to the syncretistic Hinduism. Buddhism arose and spread eastwards. In China Taoism and Confucianism held the allegiance of the people. Judaism flourished to the time of Christ, and then in the scattering of the Jews, became scattered itself. Christianity arose and spread over the Western world. Mohammedanism, from small beginnings in South Arabia spread to Egypt, Syria, Turkey, North Africa, and India. Meanwhile in Africa, the negro propitiated the feared-in deities of the forest and the river with offerings and incantations. The islanders of the South Seas erected their totems. In North America, the red Indians buried their dead in the sure hope of continuing life in the happy hunting grounds of the far west.

Wherever then, we find man, we find religion. Individuals may have scoffed at religion and refused to join in religious rites, but nowhere has any community of man followed them for any length of time.

Man, we say, is incurably religious. The question therefore arises, 'Are all these various manifestations of religion a manifestation of some single principle in the human soul? Are they not all alike, in principle and origin, purpose and desire, but differing according to local conditions and the influence of individual leaders? Do not all religions express four fundamental beliefs: (1) The existence of a supreme God; (2) The immortality of man; (3) The duty of divine worship by man; (4) A system of rewards in heaven for the good and punishment for the wicked in hell'.

With this idea, some have tried to unite all religions in one. The Arya Samajists and the Theosophists may be mentioned in this connexion. Others have maintained that though religion is ultimately one, it is better for each man to remain in that religion in which he was born. Ramakrishna Paramahamsa shows this attitude when he says 'Every man should follow his own religion. A Christian should follow Christianity, a Mohammedan should follow Mohammedanism. For the Hindus, the path of the Aryan Rishis is the best'. Mahatma Gandhi has also expressed his substantial agreement with this view. The general viewpoint is that all religions are branches of one tree, all are gates into the one City of God. In every man there is a seed of divinity, a divine light, which, if each man follows to the best of his ability, according to his circumstances, will lead him to the knowledge of God and unity with God. All the main religions, they say, teach the Fatherhood of God and Brotherhood of Man. Let this be the common creed.

By a comparative study of religions, many Christians also have come to a similar standpoint. They say that there is a certain amount of truth in all religions. They all aim at God, but some have reached higher heights than others. They all have some divine light, but some have it more pure and clear than others. All religions form a ladder to God, and each religion is

a rung of that ladder. All religions lead eventually to the City of God, but some ways are easier and more direct than others. Each religion is a mixture of gold and dross, but some are encrusted with more dross than others. Christianity, they say, is the highest and purest of religions, having reached higher heights of morality and culture than others. In it, the divine light burns more purely. Christianity, they say, is the topmost rung of the ladder that leads from man to God. It is the direct way to the City of God. What is found in Hinduism and Mohammedanism and Buddhism and Confucianism and Zoroastrianism and Judaism, is found in fuller measure in Christianity. Christianity therefore is the crown of Hinduism and of all religions. The half truth of these other religions is gathered up in the truth of Christianity. Religions do not differ in kind but only in degree.

Such teaching sounds very plausible. It makes no great demand upon a man. It asks for no sacrifice. But is this Christianity? Is this the Christianity of the New Testament? Is this the Christianity of Paul and the Apostles? Is this the Christianity for which men and maidens were thrown to the lions, were burnt at the stake, were beheaded, were exiled and imprisoned? Is this the Christianity which the great missionaries of all sections of the Church went forth to preach, at the daily risk of their lives? No, a thousand times, No. True Christianity is something other than this.

True Christianity, argues Barth, contradicts religion at its central point. All religions are in the Krisis of judgement at one point. What is that point? Religion, teaches Barth, so far from being the supreme expression of man's best, is the supreme expression of man's worst, namely his sin. It is in religion that man comes to his supreme rebellion against God. Let us explain.

Religion in its essence is the seeking of man after

God, whether God be conceived as personal or impersonal, as One or as Many. Man in his religion seeks to rise upwards to God, to know Him, to persuade and to control Him. That this is possible, all religions testify. It is possible, they say, because in essence man and God are one. There is between man and God an intimate relationship, even though this relationship may be weakened or partially destroyed by ignorance or sin. Man is a spark from the divine fire, a seed from the divine tree, a drop from the divine ocean. By religion man reaches out towards God. The finite is capable of the infinite. There is no gulf between the two which man cannot, by his piety or his merit or his sacrifices or his repentance, overcome. Sin is partial good, not yet come to final fruition. Man is God, but not yet come to his final status.

Barth denies all this, by stating his fundamental principle 'The finite is not capable of the infinite'. This principle, he holds, is one of the fundamental principles of Bible teaching and of New Testament Christianity. Between man and God, says Barth, there is an impassable gulf. Man is man and God is God. 'For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts' (Isaiah Iv. 8, 9). Religion is thus the point where this gulf between God and man becomes most clear, because by religion is the knowledge of sin, and because sin is the cause of this gulf. Religion is therefore man's supreme possibility which becomes the great impossibility in the presence of God. In religion, man is seen as man, and God as God, that is as the great Other, over against man, and above him, and beyond him. 'Religion' says Barth 'spells disruption, discord and absence of peace' because it is finally in religion that man finds himself alien from God, and torn in two within himself, desiring to do good but unable to

perform it. The more man strives to be religious, the more he must realise its vanity and emptiness. The higher he rises towards God, the more he must realise the gulf between God and himself. The more he tries to live a holy and pure life, the more he must know his life to be utterly corrupt and sinful. By religion therefore, there is no hope, only despair. 'My noblest capacity' says Barth speaking of religion, 'becomes my deepest perplexity; my noblest opportunity, my uttermost distress; my noblest gift, my darkest menace'.

If then the supreme expression of man's capacity, namely religion, proves to be futile and to involve him in greater judgement, what shall we say? Are man and God ever to remain apart, the one opposed to the other? Is there no hope for man? Yes, there is hope, says Barth, in the Word of God to man. If man in religion is unable because of the nature of things to rise to God, God is able to come down to man in Revelation. That He has done so, and now does so, and will do so, is the message of the Word of God in Jesus Christ.

Religion and Revelation must not be confused. Religion is one thing, Revelation is another, entirely distinct and separate. Religion is man's attempted movement towards God, which is futile and impossible. Revelation is God's movement towards man which is possible and actual. True Christianity therefore must not be conceived as the top rung of the ladder of religion reaching upwards to God, but a ladder let down by God to man, Christianity is not the crown of Hinduism or any other religion, but the death and end of all religions. It is the solution of the vital and supreme problem which arises in religion but is never solved there, and is incapable of solution there. 'Religion' says Barth 'is smoke arising from the plain of humanity'. Christianity is the consuming fire of God descending from heaven. Religion is the fire on

the hearth. Christianity understood as Revelation is the lightning of heaven.

Moreover, religion is a monologue in which man speaks to himself and answers himself. Christianity is a dialogue, God speaking to man through his Word and setting him in the Krisis where he has to answer for his life. Between man and God there is set up a tension of judgement and grace, punishment and forgiveness, death and life.

Moreover, religion teaches that God is immanent in the world, both in the world of nature and in the world of man. Through nature and through man, we can know God. But the God thus known is not God, but the No-God of this world. God is the unknown God, God is 'incognito' in the world. Though He created the world and sustains it continually by His power, He is not thereby known. He is as it were, hidden in it, and not apparent. He is revealed and clearly seen only in His Word. Even then, as we shall see later, the Word is veiled as far as the outward perception of men is concerned.

Christianity, then, as opposed to all religions, is the revelation of God in His word through Jesus Christ. The Word of God came to the prophets of old, but it came supremely in the person of Jesus Christ, the Word of God incarnate in the world of men. Other religions may claim revelations also, but in no religion is there to be found the same idea of revelation of the Word of God such as is found in Christianity. The incarnations claimed, for instance by Hinduism, are occasional, and fragmentary, and lack any historical basis. The incarnation of Christ is once for all, final and complete. It needs no repetition, and cannot be repeated in the very nature of it. In Christ, God has come down in the form of man, once and for all, opening the way for reconciliation and redemption.

A Christianity that admits that a Hindu can in any

way find God in Hinduism, or a Mohammedan in Mohammedanism, is no Christianity at all. All Christian missionary and evangelistic efforts depend upon realising this clearly. Christ is the final 'No' to the claims of all religions. To tone down Christianity, to remove its distinctiveness, to make it one of a number of religions, in order to win adherents of other religions into the Christian fold, is a betrayal of God and the re-crucifixion of Christ. We must not throw out bridges to other religions. Humanly speaking, the future of Christianity depends upon its narrowness, its adherence to its distinctive characteristic of final revelation. The greatest enemies of Jesus in his lifetime were not the enemies of religion but its supporters, the Pharisees and the Sadducees. Always the greatest enemy of revelation and the Word of God, is religion.

The hope of man therefore is not in Religion but in Revelation, and to a consideration of the subject of the Revelation of God through His Word, we shall now pass in our next chapter.

*Note.*—Barth, in distinguishing so sharply between Christianity and all other religions, does not intend that thereby, the Christian should as in days of old, proceed by preaching and writing to criticise and condemn other religions and all who follow them. On the contrary, Barth would admit that the Word of God has come to many born in other religions, and that thereby, these religions often contain important truths about God and man. Barth in his theology is admittedly critical, and by his sharp antithesis on this and other points, seeks to awaken reconsideration of points that are only too often taken for granted. Christianity is distinctive, not in its monopoly of the gold of truth, for there are undoubtedly grains of gold in all religions, but in its category of Revelation which no other religion knows. Between God and man, there is a great gulf which cannot be crossed from the side of man by his religion, but only from the side of God by His Revelation in His Word.—Author.

## CHAPTER II

### CHRISTIANITY AND THE WORD OF GOD

THE theology of Karl Barth is centrally a theology of the Word of God. He disclaims any merit or praise for himself. He repudiates any final authority in anything that he says or writes. The final authority is the Word of God. He himself is but a witness to the Word of God, a pointing finger, a signpost.

To what does he point? Where does the Word of God become apparent to us? If we agree that man, even in his religion cannot rise to God, where and how does God come down to us in Revelation? Barth, in reply, quotes Calvin 'We do not seek God anywhere else than in His Word. We do not think of him save with His Word. We speak nothing of him save through His Word'. It is to the consideration of this question and answer that we now proceed.

Firstly, however, let us consider other answers that have been given to this question. The first is

#### (a) GOD IS TO BE FOUND IN NATURE AND THE CREATED WORLD

The world was created by God, and is upheld by Him. His life, His nature, His power and His glory are manifest in it, 'The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament showeth his handy work'. (Ps. xix. i). God therefore, they say, is immanent in the world, and through Nature and created things, the Creator is known.

Barth, though he agrees that the world was created by the Word of God (John i. 3) and that apart from God, it could not exist, denies that through Nature or the created world, there can come to man a true

knowledge of God. What modern theology of the 18th and 19th centuries has forgotten is that that the present world is a fallen world. It has shared in the fall of man, and as such is not the original world as created by God and is thus not capable of being a true revelation of God.

The problems that arise by attempting to make the created world a revelation of God are insuperable. Did God create the tiger and the panther and the cobra as they are found to-day? Did God create the plague and cholera and malaria germ which ravage the East today? Is God the author as such, of floods and earthquakes that destroy men by the thousands? If God is revealed in nature as we know it to-day, then the tiger, the panther and the cobra, the plague, the cholera and the malaria germ, the flood and the earthquake, are the revelation of God—but of what a God? Surely not the God of whom Jesus spake, not the God of the New Testament, not the God of the long succession of Christian martyrs and heroes; the God of compassion and love.

Moreover, to claim that nature and the created world is a revelation of God, is to involve God in the world and to make Him confined to those things connected with time and space, which are the distinguishing marks of this world. Barth against the modern teaching of an immanent God, is concerned to stress the transcendence of God. He does not deny the immanence of God in the world, but he says that although God is in the world, He is hidden in it, so that He cannot be seen in it, and His nature is not revealed in it. We can see His tracks, but they are the tracks of the unknown God. The original world was good in every way and capable of revealing its Creator, but somehow or other, sin has entered into the world of man, and thereby has affected the world of nature. This fall, Barth does not place in historical time, but in what he calls 'Pre-History'. What he means will

be considered in more detail later, but numerous references to this idea are found in the New Testament i.e. 2 Tim. i. 9, 'before the world began'. Also Eph. i. 4, 'before the foundation of the world'.

Therefore, though Nature may proclaim the God-head, i.e., that there is a Creator, it can give no certain knowledge of Him.

#### (b) GOD IS TO BE FOUND IN HUMAN REASON

That man is the highest point of creation and that the supreme capability of man is his reason, or power of induction and deduction, is admitted by all. But that by means of this power of reasoning, man can find out God and know Him as He is, is strongly denied by Barth. Reason he maintains, is supreme within the limits of this world of men and time and things, but outside of those limits, it can discover nothing. God is outside of those limits, being God and not man, dwelling in eternity and not in time, being not one thing among other things, but the source of all things. There is therefore in Barth's theology no place for proofs of the existence of God such as found an important place in the systems of earlier theologians. A God that can be proved is no God. 'Le Dieu défini est le Dieu fini'. If He can be proved, He becomes merely an object of human knowledge, and as such, a mere idol. 'Reason is not given to us to know God but to know the world' says Brunner.

#### (c) GOD IS TO BE FOUND IN HUMAN EXPERIENCE

By experience comes knowledge. We can know nothing except by human experience. Is it therefore possible amongst our human experience to find God? Many theologians of the last century have believed that by human experience, rightly interpreted, we may find God. For instance, there comes within the range of human experience, the remarkable personality and life of Jesus. Many theologians have stated that in human

experience Jesus has the value of divinity for us. He is clearly different from all other men. Therefore he can only be described as divine and in Him we have the knowledge of God. This kind of theology underlies much of Christian activity which aims at 'presenting Christ'. If people see Christ, they will see in Him one Who has the value of divinity, and then believing His teaching they will arrive at the knowledge of God. There is something, they say, in the life of Jesus, which appeals to something which is divine in man, and thus which responds to it, and out of this response, this experience, there arises the knowledge of God in Christ.

The underlying fallacy of all this teaching, is that man and God are intimately related, and that God dwells in the soul of every man, and there, can be experienced by man. We have already shown that this cannot be, and therefore, from human experience, there can be no knowledge of God.

Barth rightly distinguishes between two kinds of experience. Firstly, there is ordinary human experience, that is, the reaction of the man to the world of men and things and time. By this experience, it is obvious that we cannot pass the bounds of this world, nor can we obtain any knowledge by this experience of that which is outside of this world, i.e. God. But there is also another kind of experience which is the reaction of men to the coming of the Word of God to them, from the world which is beyond time and things, which is the realm of eternity and of God. Even by this experience, there is no knowledge of God, but it accompanies knowledge of God. This experience is not the cause of knowledge of God, but the consequence of it.

#### (d) GOD IS TO BE FOUND IN RELIGIOUS INTUITION

It has often been claimed that it is possible to know God directly by intuition. That is the way of the

mystics, and is not confined to Christianity, but is also found in Hinduism and Mohammedanism. This way to God is usually described as being in three stages, firstly the Purgative way, or way of denial, secondly the Illuminative way, wherein the light of truth is experienced, and thirdly, the Unitive way, wherein the soul experiences union with the divine. The history of the Christian Church is full of the names of those who thus claim to have a direct knowledge of God, but examples can also be quoted from other religions as well. Hinduism contains many examples of men who have left all and gone out into the forests to meditate upon God, not thinking and not willing, and thereby have claimed to have come to the knowledge of God. In Mohammedanism, we have the Sufis who also claim that the way of mysticism is the way to the knowledge of God, the way which is without outward religious rites but is by means of the 'inner light' and the 'eye of the heart'.

But in our first chapter we have already stated Barth's attitude to this. 'The finite is not capable of the infinite'. Man cannot by entering into himself find God. By ceasing to think and to act and to will and to experience, he does not therefore find God but only the nothingness of his own existence. He does not thereby overcome the relativity of his creatureliness, and reach the absoluteness of God. By no intuition can he overcome the gulf caused by sin. Where then does the revelation of God meet man? 'In the Word of God alone' replies Barth. Only when the Word of God, the word from the other side of man, from beyond and above him, from the world of eternity, the word which is absolute and not relative, when this word comes to man, then the revelation of God appears.

The word of God is not a second God but the one true God in the revelation of Himself to men. It was by the Word of God that all things were created (John

i. 3). God spake and it was done. It was by his Word that God in past ages spake with the prophets and saints of old. The word of God came to Abraham (Gen. xv. 1), to Moses, and to innumerable saints of the Old Testament, revealing God to them and calling them to obedience. It came to the prophets, to Samuel (1 Sam. iii. 21), to Elijah (1 Kings xvii. 2), to Isaiah, Jeremiah, bowing them to the dust as they realised the majesty of the Most High, sending them with the message of God to the people. Finally, the Word of God became incarnate in Jesus Christ the Son of God. (Heb. i. 1-2). In Him we have the full and final revelation of God, once for all, never to be repeated.

But the fact that the word of God came to people in days gone by, and also that the word of God became incarnate upon the earth, 1,900 years ago, is not in itself a revelation of God to me, living now and here. My problem is, How may I know God? How may the word of God come to *me*? The knowledge that some people elsewhere have had a good meal does not satisfy my hunger, but it does stir me to ask whether I cannot have a good meal and satisfy my hunger as well. In the same way, though I may believe that the Word of God came to people of old, and revealed God to them, that belief does not give me the knowledge of God. The word of God must come to me, here and now, in the particular circumstances of my life, or else I cannot know God. Therefore we have to ask, How does the Word of God come to men, here and now in the 20th century?

Barth answers *chiefly in two ways*.

(1) *Through the proclamation of the Christian Church especially in sermon, service and sacrament.*

By preaching, Barth means the proclamation by the Church through its ministers of the Divine Promise. The preacher is a herald who himself has heard the Word of God, and is compelled thereby to utter it to

others according to the command of God. What he utters, is not itself word of God, but his human words may become to the hearers, by the operation of the Holy Spirit, the very Word of God itself. The minister is a witness, a pointing finger, a signpost, pointing people to the Divine Promise, i.e., the Gospel. His words are merely human words. They are the veil in which the word of God is hidden, except to the eye of faith. The preacher must preach as he himself has heard the word of God, and by his testimony others too will be in a position to hear the word of God for themselves.

In the service of the Church, in song and prayer the Divine promise is also proclaimed. As a man in prayer and song cries out unto God, confessing that he himself can do nothing right in God's sight, that his whole life is in question, God will speak to him in His Word.

The sacraments of the Church are also proclamations of the Divine promise. In baptism, the Church proclaims that man must die to himself and rise anew in God with Christ. In the Lord's Supper, it proclaims the 'Word of the Cross' (1 Cor. i. 18) the death of Christ as the abolishing of the barrier of sin, and the union of God and men, and of man and man in Christ.

Through the human words of the preacher, through the words of man in song and prayer, and through the bread and the wine and the water, comes the Word of God to man. The Word of God meets us there. They become spirit and life.

## (2) *Through the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments.*

The scriptures of the Bible are a collection of ancient documents, containing Jewish and early Christian writings. They themselves are not the Word of God,

nor are they in any sense the actual revelation of God. They, like Christian preaching are a witness to the Word of God. They contain the witness of patriarchs, prophets and apostles to the Word of God which came to them.

But the scriptures also, by the operation of the Holy Spirit may become the Word of God to man here and now. In the scriptures, the Word of God, is veiled and not perceptible to reason and proof. Only as a man makes the venture of faith, is the veil removed, and he hears God Himself speaking to him, and revealing Himself to him.

The Bible as a whole is the Church's memory in concrete form of God's past revelation, on the strength of which, the Church awaits God's present revelation to it. This revelation is one revelation and not two. That is, the revelation of the Old Testament is the same one revelation as that of the New Testament. The same God Who spake to Abraham, spake with Paul, and spake the same word. Barth also denies that there has been any development in the revelation. The revelation of the word to Moses was the same revelation which came to Peter. There is no progressive revelation. 'If revelation came gradually like the rising of the sun, we must be prepared for it also to sink like the setting sun', says Barth. The word may become more clear to us in the course of time, but it cannot become more complete. The religious experience of the prophets from Elijah to Jeremiah may develop, but the actual revelation which they experienced does not develop.

The relation of the word of God to scripture is so important a question, that its fuller consideration is left for the next chapter.

What we have to realise here is that the Word of God is never apparent in such a way as to compel belief, or in such a way that it may be treated as a subject of scientific analysis. It is always veiled from

human sight and human investigation. It cannot be recorded on a gramophone plate. It cannot be put into a test tube and analysed. It cannot be photographed. The truth of the Word of God cannot be set within a system of other truths, and compared with them.

To the ear of man, the words of the preacher are just human words. The water of baptism, and the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper, to the sight and touch and taste of man, are mere water, bread and wine. The Scriptures are just human documents, ancient history and biography, to the eye of the reader and student. Even Jesus, to the eye of the historian is but a man. A great man? Yes, a great religious leader? Yes, but incarnate word of God? No. Simply by studying the human life of Jesus, His words and His deeds, we shall not see in Him the final revelation of God. This is the fallacy of all attempts to evangelise people by simply 'presenting Christ' i.e. the Jesus of the Gospels, to them.

Jesus passed through the world 'Incognito', even as God Himself is present in the world of nature 'Incognito'. The people of His day did not recognise by any indisputable signs that Jesus was God Incarnate. The very meaning of the word 'Incarnate' is that God in coming down into the world 'Veiled Himself in Flesh' in such a way that He was not known by sight, as God, but only as man. Only to the eye of faith was Jesus seen to be God, the Word of God Incarnate, by His immediate disciples, and then not easily.

The word of God then comes and has come in three ways, in the preached word, in the written word, and in the incarnate word. Each way is a veiled way.

Now when the word of God comes to us, it comes

#### FIRSTLY AS A WORD OF JUDGEMENT

'Is not my word like as fire?' saith the Lord 'and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?' (Jer. xxiii. 29).

When the word of God comes to a man, it sets him in what Barth calls the Krisis. That is, it sets him face to face which a problem which involves his very existence. It is not one which may be settled without any personal consequences to himself, but one in which his very life hangs upon the answer. He is not a spectator, or a judge, but a participant in the struggle, a prisoner at the bar. God appears against him as an antagonist, 'as an armed man' says Barth, describing his own experience. The whole of man's life, his existence, his works, his hopes, desires, plans are all put in question, and judged as nought. In the Krisis, man meets God face to face, and knows himself undone.

Let us take some examples of this from the Bible. When God called Adam (Gen. iii. 9) 'Where art thou?', Adam was brought face to face with God in such a Krisis. This word of God to him was a personal question, a personal challenge, which contained within it his condemnation and judgement.

When the word of God came to Isaiah (Is. vi. 1-8) the prophet realised his own nothingness, and cried out 'Woe is me for I am undone'. He was in the judgement of the Krisis.

When Nicodemus came to Jesus by night (John iii. 1) he came as a spectator to discuss religion with Jesus and to satisfy his curiosity about this new teacher. But Jesus by His word sets him in the Krisis where he is no longer the spectator but the accused and the condemned. 'How can these things be?', he cries out in his amazement. Jesus forced him to think of his own existence and Nicodemus found himself no longer upon the bank of the stream, but in the middle of it, struggling for his life.

When the woman at the well at Samaria (John iv. 7) desired to talk religion with Jesus, He set her also in the Krisis 'Go, call thy husband'. Immediately she stood condemned, not her religion but she herself.

In our days, the word of God may thus come to a man by listening to Christian preaching, or by reading the Scriptures. He is confronted with the challenge of God and stands self-condemned. God or self? His will or mine? There is never any doubt in a man's mind when the word of the living God, comes to him. No man can hear the personal word of God to him, and be doubtful whether it is the word of God or no. The word carries its own authority with it.

#### SECONDLY, THE WORD OF GOD COMES AS A WORD OF GRACE

In the Krisis, man is called upon to make a decision. In the Word, God calls man to complete obedience. The man knows himself to be undone, involved in sin with no way of escape, he hears the Word of God which condemns him. In the light of God, he realises his impurity. In the absoluteness of God, he knows his relativity. And yet the very word which condemns him, offers him pardon. He is called upon to make a decision. He cannot prevaricate. He must say 'Yes', or 'No'. To say 'Yes' to God in the crisis, is the venture of faith. By grace, God has offered to him a new way. By grace, God offers to clothe him in a new garment of righteousness, i.e. that of Christ. By grace, God offers not to reckon to him his own sin, but to reckon to him the righteousness of Christ. By grace, God speaks the word of reconciliation, even to man who has rebelled against Him and sought to build his own tower of Babel to heaven, and make himself as God.

Man's 'Yes' to God is faith and is counted unto him for righteousness. Faith is thus a choice, a decision. 'To believe' says Brunner 'means to be dependent, to leave all self-securities and dependence on self behind and have one's only security in God'. 'The man who does not believe stands upon his own feet. The man

who does believe hangs in the hand of God, above the abyss of perdition'.

### THIRDLY, THE WORD OF GOD COMES AS A WORD OF PROMISE

The Word sets the man in the Krisis. In this Krisis, man by faith throws himself upon God. In return God gives to him the promise of life, the promise of redemption. God points him forward to the Day, to the End, to the Kingdom of God, and bids him hope. Here upon the earth, in the world of time and things, he is a sinner, but in the world of God, of eternity, he is accounted righteous. Here and now he is a pilgrim, passing between the ages, that which is, and that which comes. There and then, he is a citizen of the Kingdom of God. Here and now, he is clothed in mortality, awaiting death. There and then he shall be clothed in immortality beyond the frontier of death. Beyond this frontier, is his life. He becomes a pilgrim of Hope, trusting upon the promises of God, never secure in himself, but hoping in God.

## CHAPTER III

### CHRISTIANITY AND THE BIBLE

THE relationship of the Word of God to the Christian Scriptures has already been touched upon in the previous chapter. But since the use of the Scriptures plays so great a part in the life of the ordinary Christian and since so much confusion prevails in the minds of such, concerning the value and use of the Bible, and since so many conflicting views of the inspiration of the Bible are held, it seems well that this question should be discussed at greater length. Moreover, it seems to me that Karl Barth has here a valuable contribution to make in removing misunderstanding, and in presenting a view of the Scriptures and their use, which is loyal to the Reformers, sound from a theological standpoint, and yet simple and sane for the unlearned.

'Christian faith' says Brunner 'is faith in the Bible. It is the Bible which holds together all the Churches of the world, from the Roman Catholics to the Quakers'. Humanly speaking, without the Bible, there would be no lasting Church. Karl Barth himself found his new outlook through the Bible. One of his friends who was with him at the time says 'We read the Bible in a new way. We read it as the eternal word, addressed to us and to our time. We criticised it less. The Bible appeared in a new light'. In Barth's well-known address in 1916, entitled 'The strange new world within the Bible' we see how through a new reading of the Bible, Barth was developing a new outlook upon Christianity. Brunner is also profoundly loyal to the Bible and finds there his starting point. He says 'In the Bible, we hear a language which we hear nowhere

else. We meet a God Whom we meet nowhere else. That is why we believe in the Scriptures'.

We must first note briefly the difference between the place of the Bible in Christianity, and that of other sacred books in other religions. In Hinduism, we have the Vedas as the universally accepted authoritative Scriptures. They are said to be 'Sruti', that is, the direct voice of God 'heard' by the ancient rishis and written down by them. Thus the Vedas in themselves to Hindus are authoritative and binding, divine oracles, inerrant text-books of law and wisdom and rites, which all have literally to obey. In Mohammedanism, we have in a similar manner, the Koran. The orthodox Mohammedan claims that the Koran is eternal, written in heaven, and a copy was sent by God through the angel Gabriel who dictated it to Mohammed piece by piece over a period of time. These portions were afterwards collected and became the Koran as we have it today. Thus the Koran also is a divine oracle, an infallible text-book, actually the word of God in writing.

There is at once seen to be a great difference between the Hindu's faith in the Vedas, or the Mohammedan's faith in the Koran, and the Christian's faith in the Bible. The Bible is not a divine oracle to the Christian, though some have attempted to make it so. It is the witness to the revelation of God in Jesus Christ. The true revelation of God cannot be a book, nor a doctrine written in a book. It is a living person, Jesus Christ.

Let us now consider some of the current views amongst Christians about the Bible and its use.

### (1) THE ROMAN CATHOLIC VIEW

Generally speaking, in the Roman Catholic Church, the priest alone has the authority to use and interpret the Bible. Even the priest has no liberty to use the Bible according to his own individual judgement, but

must accept the interpretations of the Church as a whole, laid down in various statements of the Church in the past, and added to from time to time by the Pope. To the Roman Catholic Church therefore, the Bible is not actually the Word of God, in itself, but only so, as interpreted and taught by the Church. It is no direct channel of grace from God to the Christian. The only direct channel they say, is the Church. The Bible thus is used solely to establish the doctrines of the Church, for which purpose also the writings of the Church fathers are used.

The effect of this view is that for many hundreds of years, the Bible was not available to the individual Christian, and in fact was forbidden to him. It was often a crime against the Church for a man to possess a Bible. Even now, the Bible is rarely used privately by Roman Catholic Christians.

## (2) THE VERBAL INSPIRATION VIEW

This doctrine sprang up at the time of the Reformation, though it was not held by the chief Reformers such as Luther, Calvin, or Zwingli. It says that every word in the Bible is inspired by God, written by apostles and prophets and others as though dictated word by word by the Spirit of God to them. It is without error or mistake or fault of any kind. Whatever it teaches is true. Even when the Bible speaks of history, cosmology, astronomy or any other of the sciences, every statement is literally true. The Bible is in itself a complete revelation of God and all that man needs to know for his salvation. It is a book of divine laws which man must literally obey. From Genesis to Revelation it is in itself the word of God.

This view is prevalent in many sections of the Protestant Church today. It has led to the charge being made by the Roman Catholics that when the Reformation tore down the Roman Catholic doctrine

of the infallible Church, they put in its place the doctrine of an infallible Book. In practice, this view of the Bible has led to its being used as a divine oracle. By claiming, however, that every statement in the Bible is true, even in the realms of history, biology and cosmology, those holding this view have come into sharp conflict with the historians and other scientists. Consequently amongst people educated and trained in the various sciences, this view has been largely rejected, though it is still held by the ordinary people to a large extent. The same applies to the Mission fields of India today. The ordinary village Christian generally holds to this idea and use of the Bible as the inerrant word of God.

### (3) THE HIGHER CRITICAL OR MODERNIST VIEW

Under the attacks of historians and others upon the inerrancy of the Bible, a new view has arisen during the last 100 years. This view may be understood from the following words of Rev. Dick Sheppard, one of the leading ministers of the Anglican Church in London.<sup>1</sup> He says 'The Bible does not attempt to teach either science or history. Its primary purpose is to record man's experience in his search for God. The Bible might well be called 'The Books of the gradual revelation of God to man'. We must approach the Bible, especially the Old Testament expecting to find in its revelation of religion, through human experience, a gradual growth upwards from darkness to light, from lower to higher truths'. It is thus argued that there are many mistakes in the Bible as in any other ancient book. The people who wrote these Books of the Bible were limited in their knowledge, especially of history, astronomy, cosmology, biology and geology and consequently, made many erroneous statements. The Bible has therefore to be studied and these

<sup>1</sup> 'Now Canon of St. Paul's Cathedral, London'.

mistakes pointed out. The value of the Bible is that it is a record of what people thought in those old days, especially of what they thought about God. It is valuable for its moral teaching. It is especially valuable because in the New Testament, it gives us the life and teachings of Jesus as remembered by His disciples, though even here they often failed to understand Him and wrote what He probably did not say. The New Testament also gives us a fairly accurate history of the early Church, and by letters of Paul and others, an account of the doctrines believed by them. The holders of this view, however reserve to themselves the right to judge whether this or that statement is true or whether this or that doctrine as taught therein, is worthy of acceptance or not. That is to say, there is no authority in the Bible itself, the authority is subjective in man himself. The word of God, they say, is not the Bible itself, but is contained in the Bible.

The effect of this view is that the Bible has to a large extent lost its value as a book of the revelation of God to man today. It becomes one book among many books. Dr. McConnachie says 'This view has undoubtedly weakened the authority of the Bible as the Word of God and reduced it many minds to an all too human book'. It leaves the Bible entirely at the mercy of the individual preacher. The prevailing fashion in some Western churches now is to preach without any verse or passage of Scripture at all. In the sermon, if the Bible is quoted, it is quoted as an illustration, and often put alongside of the Vedas, the Koran, and other books. Shakespeare and Paul are put almost on the same level as authorities for man. The higher critical view may be said to be on the whole the view of the minister, the verbal inspiration view, that of the ordinary layman. Dr. Lowrie says of America 'Amazing as it is, the people in general still believe in the Bible, in spite of the painstaking

efforts of a million ministers, Sunday by Sunday, throughout several generations to convince them that it is not essentially different from any other Book.'

#### NOTES ON MODERNISM

'Modernism' in Christian Theology is a term used to denote dissent from the strictly orthodox theology of the 17th, 18th and early 19th centuries. Modernists differ widely among themselves, but agreeing that the old orthodoxy cannot be held in the light of modern discoveries, they seek to find a basis for faith which is not opposed to modern philosophy and science. With regard to philosophy, Modernism bases itself upon Idealism. With regard to science, it bases itself upon Evolution. It rejects the authority of the Church and the Bible in matters of dogma, and 'humanises' theology by giving human experience and reason great weight as revelations of God. In its practical programme, social service and reconstruction hold a prominent place. In relation to other religions, Modernism is tolerant, seeing a revelation of God in them, and considering them as stepping-stones towards Christianity.

#### (4) KARL BARTH'S VIEW OF THE BIBLE

Barth is dissatisfied with all the previous views expressed. The second view, that of verbal inspiration, makes the Bible a corpse. The individual Christian, according to this, has to believe beforehand and has to accept as an axiom, that between the two covers of the Bible, nothing but divine truth is stored up. This is idolatry and has done great damage to Christian faith. Modern knowledge has shown quite clearly that many statements of the Bible are not true to fact, having been made in the dawn of human knowledge. The doctrine of verbal inspiration confuses form and content, and assumes that the form is essential to the preservation of the content, i.e. the Word of God. It has made the Scriptures themselves actual revelation and Word of God. The Word of God can never be a book, nor the sum total of doctrines written in a book, says Barth.

Barth and his disciples acknowledge that the Scriptures need historical and textual criticism. Brunner particularly accepts radical criticism of the Bible. He says 'We know that the world was not created a few

thousand years ago, but that we have to reckon with billions of years and even so, we do not reach the end. We know that there never was a paradise on earth with Adam and Eve and the serpent. We know that most of the Old Testament pre-history is mythology. With regard to the New Testament, we have learnt that from the standpoint of history, the 4th Gospel, as compared with the Synoptics, is much inferior, and even the synoptic tradition, is very unreliable, and full of contradictions'.

What Barth does object to in the critical view is the way in which reason is set up as a standard not only to criticise the Bible as a book, but to condemn untested the claim of the Bible to be the medium of the Word of God to men. This is a unique claim which places the Bible apart from all other books. The critics upon the other hand, usually start out upon certain presuppositions, for instance, that the Bible claim to be the medium of the Word of God, is invalid, that anything which cannot be understood by reason is to be rejected as myth, that miracles are impossible, that only those truths which can be verified by reason are to be accepted as true, that the only revelation of God to man is through human reason and experience, and that therefore any claims of the Bible to contain a special revelation which is not found elsewhere, is to be rejected. These suppositions cannot be taken as axioms, says Barth, and need serious criticism themselves.

According to Barth, what gives the Bible its supreme value is that after all the criticism of the text, and of the history and the morality and the religion contained in it, has been accomplished, there still remains the claim that here is the Word of God, veiled and hidden though it be under the outward form of human words. We have in the Bible more than a history book, more than a book of morals, more than a book of religion.

*(a) The Bible is more than a book of history*

The Bible gives us not only a history of Israel, and the Jews and the early Christian Church, but also a history of Redemption. God has revealed Himself in the history and literature of Israel in a way in which He has not done so in the history and literature of Greece, Rome, India or China. The Bible history is the history of God's breaking into human history, as the downstroke upon the horizontal. The call of Abraham, the sending of Moses, the election of Gideon, the mission of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and John the Baptist, the conversion of Paul, are all illustrations of the breaking in of God upon the history of man. The promise to Abraham and its fulfilment, the selection of Isaac, the guidance of the children of Israel, the destruction of Jerusalem and the Exile, and the Return, all reveal the breaking in of God into human history.

But while God has revealed himself in the history of the Jews, that history of the Jew is not in itself the revelation of God. History of itself can never be revelation of God, for it is temporal and relative. Human history is just the story of the evolution of the race of sinners, who never can rise above their sinful state. Revelation, on the other hand, is the breaking into this world of time and things and human history, of God, of the divine world, of eternity, as something qualitatively different, new and strange. Revelation is history but history is not revelation. Biblical history is a witness to revelation, to this striking down of the Word of God into history.

*(b) The Bible is also more than a book of morals*

It is true that the Bible has much to say about morality. We have in it a record of man's attempts to achieve righteousness, by sacrifice, by ritual, by precept, by all the various accompaniments of

religion. But the Bible itself witnesses that all human efforts after self-righteousness are in vain. Man lies under the curse of the law, that is under the question of his relativity and creatureliness. All his efforts to live the good life are seen to be in vain. As a book of moral precepts, the Bible is no more able to offer the solution of the problem than other books of morals.

But the Bible also bears witness to another righteousness, namely the righteousness of God. It speaks of this righteousness as 'revealed to man', as 'imputed and reckoned to men'. This righteousness is God's righteousness, not visible to the world as a concrete thing, but as a righteousness of the real world of God. By the imputing of this righteousness, an Abraham becomes the father of many nations, a David is declared a man after God's own heart, and publicans and harlots enter the kingdom of God. The secret of this righteousness is that by the grace of God, it is reckoned through faith, and through faith alone. It comes not by striving nor by not striving, not by being, nor by not being. It is the reckoning of God, known only to Him and not yet seen in actuality. It is nevertheless the only righteousness, because it is the righteousness of God and not the righteousness of man. Biblical revelation is the revelation of the righteousness of God i.e. the Bible is the record of and witness to this revelation in a way no other book is.

*(c) The Bible is more than a book of religion*

The Bible has much to say about religion. It describes at length the religion of the Jews. It also speaks of how men sought after and cried out unto God. In so much then, it may be described as a book of religion. But it also exposes the futility of religion, its questionableness, its relativity, its temporalness. Much of the polemic of the Bible is directed against

religion. Amos, Isaiah, Jeremiah and the prophets declaim against it. John the Baptist denounces the religionists of his day. No one spoke more harshly and condemningly of the religious leaders of His day than Jesus. St. Paul's greatest fight also was not against non-religion, but against religion in its many forms. It was religion that stoned the prophets, that imprisoned the apostles, and crucified Christ. Religion, so far from saving a man, shows him all the more clearly that he is not saved; so far from providing him with righteousness, it shows him the depths of his unrighteousness; so far from giving him peace and happiness and security, it destroys his peace, ruins his happiness and leaves him entirely insecure. The Bible witnesses clearly that not by religion can man come to God.

What gives the Bible its unique value then is not its record of man's striving after God, but its record of God's coming to man; not of man's crying out to God, but of God's answer to man. 'The Bible tells us,' says Barth 'not how we are to speak to God but how God has spoken to us: not how we find a way to God but how He has sought and found a way to us'. The Bible then must not be taken as a book of religious doctrine or devotion, but as a witness to the Word of God coming to men.

We should not be disturbed in our minds by the criticism of the text and history and authorship of the Bible. It is as necessary to the building up of a true faith in the Bible as the digging of the foundations of a building. Where criticism leaves off, true theology begins. Biblical criticism in itself can destroy nothing except the misconception of confounding the human and the divine. Once we realise that the Word of God is given to us in the Bible in human form, then criticism of the form becomes necessary, but it cannot destroy the content, but rather establishes it. **Nor is such criticism new.** It is well known how Luther

himself freely criticised the Bible. For instance he describes the Epistle of James as 'an epistle of straw'. But Luther realised what we must realise, namely, as he said 'The Bible is the crib in which Christ is laid'. Criticism of the Bible form is like cleaning the dirt off an inscription in order to make it more legible. It can in no way alter the inscription underneath which is 'Jesus Christ, the Word of God'.

The question now arises 'Though it is admitted that the Bible records how the word of God came to men of old, and how the incarnate Word in Jesus appeared to His disciples, to Paul and to the people of the early Church, what value is that to me?'

A mediated word of God, i.e., the imperfect witness of men of past ages to the word of God as it came to them, is no word of God to me. In the books of the Bible, the word of God is affected in its mediation by the temperament, character and circumstances of the writers. Just as the landscape seen through a red glass appears red, so the word of God mediated through the writers of the books of the Bible is coloured by their character and outlook. It is not thus actual Word of God, but mediated Word of God. The essence of the meaning of 'Word of God' is that it is personal, present and particular. The Word of God is only a word of God to me when it meets me (1) individually, (2) here and now, (3) in my particular circumstances. The truth of the word of God is not general, timeless, impersonal truth, but something or rather someone must come to me individually, breaking in from the other world. The Word of God can never be a body of doctrine, applicable to everyone at all times and in all places and under all circumstances. Else it becomes one thing amongst other things, and not the unique living word of God.

How then can I find the Word of God through the Bible? This is not the simple matter that some imagine. By merely reading the Bible, we cannot find

of ourselves the Word of God therein. 'The Bible' says Barth 'is God's word so far as God allows it to be His word, so far as he speaks through it.' We cannot find the word of God in the Bible. God must reveal it to us. But if I read the Bible, expecting God to speak to me through it, I shall find that the Bible, some part of it, some verse of it, some word of it, becomes the word of God to me. I shall find some word searching me, challenging me, guiding me, calling me. I shall be set in the Krisis of decision. I must choose, to accept or reject. The word of God when it first comes to me sets me in the great Krisis, when I am condemned and judged, and then offered by grace the righteousness of God. This is the initial Krisis, but all through my life, again and again, I shall find the word of God coming to me, ever afresh bringing me into judgement, but restoring me, 'The Lord hath yet more light and truth to break forth from His holy word' said John Robinson, the minister to the Pilgrim Fathers as they set out for America.

At no time, however, will the whole Bible be Word of God to us. Now it may be one part, and now another, but that particular word which fastens itself upon us, which strikes us in some concrete situation, that word which comes without doubt from outside of ourselves, that word becomes for us at that moment the word of God. John Bunyan speaking of a certain verse of Scripture wrote 'That sentence darted in upon me. The words did with great power work in me. That Scripture fastened on my heart'. That is inspiration, the Holy Spirit of God speaking through the word of Scripture the living Word of God. St. Augustine, in a state of unbelief and sin, hears a voice 'Take and read'. He takes the New Testament, opens at random and reads Romans xiii. 13. The spirit made the words live, and Augustine was converted. The words of Paul became Word of God to him. So may the words of any of the writers of the

books of the Bible become word of God to us by the operation of the Spirit of God at the moment of Krisis. Therefore we may sum up what we have written about the Word of God and the Bible by saying (1) the Bible is not the Word of God in itself, (2) nor is the Word of God contained in the Bible, (3) but the Bible becomes Word of God to us individually in the present by the operation of the Holy Spirit.

## CHAPTER IV

### CHRISTIANITY AND THE CHURCH -

To understand the relationship of Barthianism to the Christian Church, it is necessary to look back to the days of Martin Luther, the great Protestant reformer. Generally speaking, in his day, there was but one Church in the Western world, the Church of Rome, ruled over by the Pope. Kings and commoners, statesmen and peasants, rich and poor, high and low, were all members of this one great Church. At the word of the Pope, all bowed in subjection. All over the Western world, great cathedrals reared their lofty spires in pride to the heavens. Within them day by day, the great oblation of the Mass was offered upon the altars by the priests, whilst the common people gazed on in wonder. Here and there, were great monasteries, the abodes of learning, where the Scriptures were read and the writings of the Fathers were studied. All that man had to do was to submit himself to the Church and how then could he go astray? By confessing his sins to the priest and receiving his absolution, by penance and by monetary offering, how should his soul not enter into heaven at death?

The Church of the Middle Ages stood forth, mighty and self-confident, arrayed in glory and pride. The Pope was the greatest monarch on earth, the Vicar of Christ. The great kings of the earth came to prostrate themselves at his feet and to seek his favour. 'Outside of the Church there is no salvation' was the motto for all. 'Submit to the Church and thou shalt be saved' was the message proclaimed. Who then should question this mighty organisation, going back to the days of Peter and Paul, and holding the keys of the Kingdom of God? The man who above

all others rent this great edifice in twain, exposed its heresy, its pride, its worldly character, was Martin Luther. And it is to Martin Luther that Karl Barth has turned again in these days, when the Christian Church, though not one but many in its parts, again has forgotten that the Church of Christ is not of this world but of God.

The real starting point of the Reformation was the realisation by Luther that the assurances of the Roman Church concerning righteousness before God, were a failure and a delusion in the face of the reality of sin. The Roman Church offered a salvation based upon the Mass, wherein they said, God met man and saved him. The bridge between man and God, they said, was the Mass as administered by duly-ordained priests of the Roman Church. But Luther, himself an ordained priest of the Roman Church, found that this brought him no nearer to God and gave him no assurance of God's forgiveness. When he looked around him, he found that others also were in the same predicament. The Roman Church was filled with abuses and with pride, establishing itself as the greatest power on earth, and taking the place of God. Finally Luther came to realise from the study of the New Testament, that the gulf between man and God could not be bridged from man's side, even with the help of the Church, the Mass and all his own efforts. It was all in vain. Then Luther met with God, because God came down to him—came down, not in the Mass but in His Word, assuring him of judgement and forgiveness. For even though man is, and remains ever on this earth, a sinner, God by an act of grace which is inexplicable, counts him as righteous, not by his works but by his faith. Righteousness before God cannot be earned, nor purchased nor merited. It is the free gift of God through Jesus Christ unto Him that believes. This was the great discovery of the Reformation, not a new discovery but the rediscovery

of the distinctive characteristic of Christianity which had been lost sight of by the Church in its worldly glory and pride.

The Reformation which followed was not an attempt to build up a new religion, but a return to the Word of God of the New Testament. The Reformation was a Krisis, a judgement upon the sins of the Church. The Church of that time was in the darkness of corruption. The Reformation opened a window to let in the light of the Word of God, and that light became a judgement.

Barth, in the 20th century, has been called 'a young Luther', recalling the Church to the Word of God. Just as the early Christian Church, at first pure and humble, gradually went astray, and grew in pride and worldly glory, so, says Barth, the reformed Church of the 16th century, again purified and humbled, has also gradually gone astray again and turned the Word of God into a word of man. Again the Church has to face the Krisis. It has come to a day of judgement where it again must acknowledge itself as nothing and God as all in all.

In his doctrine of the Church, Barth distinguishes between what he calls (1) the Church of Esau and (2) the Church of Jacob. The Church of Esau is the visible Church as it appears among men, the subject of Church history. It is in this visible Church that schisms and reformations occur, where failure and corruption is visible. The Church of Jacob, on the other hand, is the invisible, unknowable and impossible Church. It has in this world, neither place nor name nor history. It is capable neither of expansion nor contraction. The two Churches, of course, do not stand over against each other as two things. But the Church of Esau, that is the visible organised Church must always remember that it is the Church of Esau and not the Church of Jacob. It can itself never become the Church of Jacob, and is therefore in

tribulation as long as it lives. The Church of Esau must continually die in order that the Church of Jacob may appear. The Church therefore must live by promise and hope, even as must the individual Christian connected with it. 'Whenever it sets itself forth says Barth 'as alive and triumphant it hath a name that it liveth, but lo, it is dead'.

What then must be the position and life of the Church in the world of men?

### (1) IT MUST BE A CHURCH

The Church, in the New Testament meaning, is the body of those 'called out' by God through His Word to be a community of His people. The idea of the Roman Church was that all people born in a Christian country were Christians, and thus members of the Roman Church. Protestantism, on the other hand, stressed the nature of the personal call from God. We are members of the Church of Christ, not by birth but by re-birth: not because of upbringing but because of the down-coming of God in His Word, calling us out individually to be His people. Thus the Roman Church has become an institution, the Protestant Church a fellowship. It is true that the Protestant Church has not always kept this idea in mind, but Barth seeks to recall it and stress it.

'Outside of the Church there is no salvation' says the Roman Church. Barth agrees, but for a different reason and in a different way. The Roman Church understands thereby that outside of the Roman Church Institution, no one can be sure of salvation. Barth says that there can be no salvation outside of the Church because the Word of God is to be heard only inside the Christian Church Fellowship. No man can discover it for himself. The true Church is a divine fellowship. It is not a religious society based on a common religious experience of its members, nor a

gathering of people brought together for common ends and interests, or for mutual edification. In distinction from all such fellowships, the Church is built not on the desire, will or purpose of man, but on the will of God.

There can be no Buddhist, Mohammedan or Hindu Church in this sense, because no other association is built on such a divine revelation. God has revealed Himself once for all in history, at a definite time and place, and that alone is the origin of the Christian Church. Because of that historical revelation alone, there can be a Christian Church.

## (2) THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH MUST BE A CHURCH OF THE WORD OF GOD

It is within this fellowship and nowhere else that the Word of God is spoken with authority, and received by faith. It was the preaching of the word which formed the Christian Church. It is by the preaching of the Word that the Church exists.

The Protestant Church has often been accused of substituting an infallible book for an infallible Church, as the final authority for Christians. This accusation, however true of the later reformed Church, was not true of the main Reformers. Nor is it true of Barth and his followers. Barth finds the Word of God through the Scriptures, it is true, but the authoritative character of the Bible belongs to it as the Word of God primarily and only secondarily as Scripture and canon of the Church.

Again and again, the Word of God brings the Church into the Krisis and judges it. Again and again, the Church needs to be reformed according to the Word of God. The Church must be the sphere where the Word of God is proclaimed and the Church must continually bear witness to it as the word of another and not of itself. In so much as the Church

proclaims a word of man, in such measure she is not true to her calling, is not the Church, and must fail. The Church is thus a fellowship of those to whom the Word has come, who have yielded to it in obedience and who proclaim it in human tongue in the world.

### (3) THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH MUST KNOW ITSELF AS A CHURCH OF SINNERS

Before the Reformation of the 16th century, the Roman Church in no way knew itself as a Church of Sinners. It never realised the completeness of the gulf between man and God, caused by sin. It taught that man was sick in sin only, and that by taking the medicine of the Church, that sickness could be cured, that man could, by obedience to the ordinances of the Church, gradually become righteous in the sight of God and achieve salvation. Luther however, realised that man is not just sick but absolutely dead in sin. His nature is radically evil in the sight of God, and righteousness can only be attributed to him by the free grace of God in Christ. Even then, he still remains a sinner in this world, standing in faith and obedience, waiting and hoping for the day of his redemption.

When the Church forgets that she is only a fellowship of sinners justified by grace, and becomes proud and self-confident; when the Church becomes a society of the religiously minded, the home of culture, the propagator of civilisation, the teacher of morals; then she is no longer the Church of sinners and no longer the Church of God. The Church of God is to be in the world but not of the world. She has nothing in herself to boast of. All she is, she is of God. All she has, she has of God. Her light is not her own, but the light of God. Her glory is not the glory of the world, but the glory of the Cross. Her word is not her word but God's. Her authority is not in herself, but in the Word of God. Her home is not here but there. Her

hope is not on earth, but in heaven. Her foundation and end is not in man but in God. Therefore, she must be and continue to be a Church of Sinners, living by hope in the grace of God.<sup>1</sup>

#### (4) THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH MUST BE AN AUTHORITATIVE CHURCH

While both the Roman and the Protestant Churches hold to this principle, they differ upon the nature of the authority. The Roman Church claims for itself the complete and only authority for Christians everywhere, alleging that this authority was given to Peter by Christ, and by Peter handed down by the succession of Popes in the Roman Church. The Pope alone is the final authority to declare the mind and will of God to man.

The Protestant Church, in rejecting this authority, has attempted to set up other authorities in its place. Some, as we have already seen, set up the Scriptures as the final authority. Others make human reason or human experience the great criterion of religious truth. Consequently, the Protestant Church can speak with no authoritative voice at the present time. Yet men everywhere are hungering for some real authority to direct their steps. Many despairing of finding such an authority in Protestantism, give up their intellectual freedom and blindly submit to the authority of the Roman Church. Others, however, in the Roman

<sup>1</sup> In calling the Church to realise itself as a Church of Sinners, we must not of course think that Barth takes up the position of those in the early Church at Rome (*Romans vi. 1*), who are alleged to have suggested 'Let us continue in sin that grace may abound'. No one instructed by the Word of God could take up this position. Barth is here thinking of sin as, to quote his own words, 'that by which man as we know him is defined', i.e., his relativity and dependence. The Church of Sinners is not intended to be contrasted with the Church of Saints. The true church is both.—Author.

Church itself, dissatisfied with this blind obedience, and realising its impotence, leave the Roman Church and join one or other of the sects of Protestantism, often becoming a law and an authority unto themselves.

In this confusion, Barth points the Church to the real authority, one which demands no blind intellectual obedience and yet one which carries with it a real authenticity and satisfaction. This authority, says Barth, is the Word of God, communicated through the Church to its members by the Spirit of God. True authority must be Divine authority, must be a present authority, and must be one which comes home to the individual as necessary of acceptance. Where God declares His will, and where His judgement fails, i.e. in the living ever-present Word of God, there alone is true authority. Therefore, the Church must once more take its stand upon the Word of God and leave aside any other authority claimed for Bible or Pope or reason or experience. If it does this, then once again it will speak with true authority i.e., with the authority of God Himself.

#### (5) THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH MUST BE A CHURCH OF HUMILITY

The Roman Church has forgotten that the Christian Church must be a church under the sign of the Cross, living in the world without visible power or greatness or glory. Lifting itself high and conspicuous in the world of men, it has made itself into a visible institution among other institutions of the world, magnifying itself to take the place of God in His relation to men. It was for this cause that the Reformers went out from it to form a Church without earthly dignity or power. They rejected the claim of the Pope to be the head of the Church, to be a King above Kings. The Church of Christ, they said, is a David and not a Goliath, poor yet making many rich, not a Church

triumphant but a Church in weakness and humility under the Cross, bearing the reproach of Christ. It must have no human importance in itself and must lay no claim to fame, dignity and culture. It has no abiding place in this world, but must ever 'go forth unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach'. (Hebrews xiii. 13.)

But even the Protestant Church of the 20th century is far from holding to this ideal. Everywhere, we see a craving for form, for a visible standing in the world, for outward authority, together with a dream and pride of power. It tends to link itself as a co-partner with earthly kingdoms, to claim a high status in the world of men and culture, and to control the policy of nations.

But the Church, says Barth, is only the earthly body of the heavenly head. In itself it is nothing. It can only listen to God in 'confident despair' (Luther). It must not cry 'Church, Church', but 'God, God'. The Protestant Church of today, however, seems to be too self-confident in speech and behaviour, too sure of itself, too self-dependent, too cheerful and masterful 'as though it had the Word of God in its pocket' says Barth. This must not be. The Church of the Word of God must ever be a Church of Humility, subject to judgement, seeking not its own power and glory but seeking to show forth by its humility, the invisible power and glory of Christ.

#### (6) THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH MUST BE A PREACHING CHURCH

The main function of the Roman Church of the Middle Ages was the administration of the Mass by the priest. Except among some of the Friars, preaching as we understand it today, was a lost art. In the Church of the Reformation, however, there came a great change. The central function of the Church

was felt to be the Preaching of the Word of God. The sermon took the central place in the Church service. It is here, said the Reformers, in the sermon and not in the Mass, that we have the event in which a personal meeting with God takes place. 'Of the divine service' said Luther 'the greatest and most important portion is the preaching and teaching of the Word of God.'

The Protestant Church, outwardly at any rate, has continued this emphasis into the 20th century. But while this is so, there can be discerned a growing tendency in many quarters to minimise the importance of preaching, and to exalt outward symbolic acts to a higher place. Vestments, liturgies, music, architecture and lights are stressed, and the sermon is often cut down to a short talk by the minister upon some moral, social, political or religious question. Moreover, the minister in the sermon gives his own personal views about some problem or difficulty and the congregation is left to accept his viewpoint or reject it as they think fit.

Against this tendency, Barth summons the Church to realise afresh that the Christian Church is essentially a preaching Church. The sermon must again be the centre and soul of Christian worship. 'Worship,' says Luther 'consists simply in this, that our dear Lord Himself speaks with us through His Holy Word, and we again speak with Him through prayer and song'. The preacher's word, when he preaches the Gospel, should be the medium whereby the very Word of God comes to his hearers, bringing them over and over again, into the Krisis. The preaching of the Church must not be just a matter of stating opinions on religious, moral or social questions. Preaching means the cry of the Herald, the word of a witness. The Church must *proclaim* the gospel of Christ, not just discourse about it. The true Church exists by its preaching just as a fire exists by burning. The Church that does not spread the fire of Christ,

indicates that it is not burning itself. To a large extent, this is the failure and condemnation of the Church of the 20th century. 'Where the proclamation of the Word' says Luther 'as the main matter goes right, there everything else goes right'. The Church therefore must be a preaching Church.

#### (7) THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH MUST BE A SACRAMENTAL CHURCH

Karl Barth, with the Reformers, accepts the two sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Not through the sermon only, not through the Bible only, but also through the sacraments, the Word of God comes to us, says Barth. But just as in the Bible and in the sermon, the actual Word of God is hidden and veiled from sight in the form of a written book and a spoken word of man, so the sacraments also are not actually Word of God in themselves but the Word of God in a hidden and veiled form, i.e., in the form of bread and wine and water. In the sacraments, the Word of God is presented in the form of a picture. The Bible is the written form, the sermon is the spoken form, the sacrament is the seen form. The Word of God meets us in all three. To the man of faith, the sacraments, as well as the Bible and the Christian sermon, proclaim the promises of God. The Christian Church, therefore, must proclaim the Word of God, not only through the Bible and the sermon, but also through the sacraments. The sacraments, however, are not the actual word of God, as some have maintained, but the Word in a veiled and hidden form, perceptible only to faith. To make the sacraments a direct Word of God is idolatry.

In baptism, we have a picture of what God has done for us, of His grace whereby we die and yet live; we are buried and yet rise again. It is the Church's

proclamation of its hope of resurrection. In the Lord's Supper, we have again a picture of what God has done for us, of the blood and body of Jesus Christ given freely for us. We must not come to it thinking that our ideals and promises are to make for us a way unto God and purchase our salvation. We must on the contrary come to it as to a picture which shows that a way has been made for us to God by Jesus Christ. The Lord's Supper is therefore the Church's proclamation of its hope of redemption.

This then, is the seven-fold idea of the Church which Barth holds out before us. As we compare it with the actual state of the 20th century Church, we cannot but realise that the Church is to a large extent failing in its witness to the Word of God. In this, the sin and judgement of the Church is clearly seen. In place of the righteousness of God, it continually makes efforts to set its own human righteousness. It attempts to complete the work of God by its own human work and power. It has allied itself to the world, surrendered itself to human culture, lifted itself up in pride and has thus become a mere Church of Esau. It has lost sight of its true existence as the Church of Jacob, and so the time of its judgement has come. It is brought to the Krisis. A new Reformation is at hand.

## CHAPTER V

### CHRISTIANITY AND THE KINGDOM OF GOD

ONE of the most frequent phrases upon the lips of Jesus during His earthly life was that of 'The Kingdom of God' or 'The Kingdom of Heaven'. In spite of the numerous parables that Jesus spake concerning it, or perhaps *because of* the numerous parables, what Jesus meant by the Kingdom of God has been a perpetual source of difficulty to succeeding generations of Christians. The general opinion at present seems to be that by the spread of Christian ideals in the world, and by effecting social, moral and political changes amongst men, the world is gradually getting more civilised. All such efforts are said to be efforts towards bringing in the Kingdom of Heaven upon earth. This Kingdom is envisaged as a golden age in the future, when all injustice shall be done away with, when all men shall be happy and contented, when there shall be no more wars, when there shall be no poor, when all shall acknowledge the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man. It is believed that by gradual progress, the world is getting better and better, and that soon this golden age will come to pass.

There are other Christians; however, who look forward to the visible return of Jesus Christ to the earth, at which time all true believers will be taken away from the earth and the world will be given over to tribulation and judgement. After this first judgement Christ will again return to the earth with His saints, set up His throne in Jerusalem, and reign for one thousand years upon the earth as its visible King. Then comes the second judgement, when the present

world will be destroyed and a new heaven and earth will be formed wherein Christ and His saints will live for ever. This will be the Kingdom of God. It will not come gradually but suddenly, not by the efforts of men, but by the personal return of Jesus Christ.

Barth, however, rejects both of these views. To take the second view first, the idea of the Kingdom of God coming at some future historical date, whether near or afar off, by the personal visible coming of Christ, is built up upon some of the prophecies of the Old Testament, especially those of Daniel, together with some of the sayings of Jesus, Paul and Peter, and especially the prophecies of the book of Revelation. These prophecies are taken literally without regard to the historical context, and woven into a scheme of a Millenium on earth, to which the name 'Kingdom of God' is given. Some have even attempted to fix the date of the Second Coming of Christ. Even John Wesley fixed it somewhere in the 19th century. Bengel the great commentator fixed it in 1836. In more recent times, 1914, 1927, 1934 have all been put forward with great confidence by certain Christians as the date for the return of Christ.

Such a doctrine, says Barth, shows a confusion of time and eternity, and a misunderstanding of both. 'There is an infinite qualitative difference between time and eternity' stresses Barth as one of the first principles of his theology. The whole of the Christian message is based upon this and cannot be rightly understood apart from it. Eternity is not just an endless prolongation of time. Endlessly prolonged it would still be time. A tower endlessly high would still be a tower. But eternity is something quite different in quality from time. Eternity breaks in upon time like a vertical line or plane striking down upon a horizontal line or plane. Eternity is the other side of time, beyond it, above it, and over it and around it. Eternity existed before time began. 'Before the world

began', 'before the foundation of the world' says the Bible. The coming of the Word of God to man is the breaking in, the striking down of eternity into time. The call of Abraham and the prophets, the birth and resurrection of Christ, the transfiguration, the conversion of Paul, the visions of John, are all Biblical examples of this breaking in of eternity into the world of time. This, says Barth, is the coming of the Kingdom of God. Just as the virgin birth of Jesus, and His resurrection cannot be understood or grasped by sight or human reason, so the Kingdom of God cannot be understood or grasped by sight or reason. The Kingdom of God is therefore not a visible Kingdom, in the world of time, nor can it come in the historical future. 'The Kingdom of God is among you' said Jesus 1,900 years ago. That is, its coming is not a chronological event to be waited for, nor can it ever be perceived in time and space upon this earth.

Barth has little patience with those who await a visible coming of Christ to earth. He describes their longing as one for 'a crude theatrical spectacle'. Will there never be an end of all our ceaseless talk about the delay of the visible coming of Christ? he cries. It is true that Paul and the apostles awaited the day of the Kingdom of God, but not in a temporal sense. 'The Day is at hand' cried Paul (Rom. xiii. 12) 1,900 years ago. It was at hand then and is still at hand today. It was even at hand in Abraham's day, 4,000 years ago. Jesus said 'Abraham rejoiced to see my day; and he saw it, and was glad.' (John viii. 56).

Barth also rejects the first view that the Kingdom of God will come by the gradual progress of the human race. By the social, moral, political and religious efforts of man, progress may be made in human welfare, but to call this the Coming of the Kingdom of God shows great confusion between man and God.

The kingdom in this view is not a kingdom of God in the Biblical sense at all, but a kingdom of Man, established by man, carried on by his planning and efforts, with the aim of the glory of man. The apocalyptic Kingdom spoken of by Jesus and the apostles is something other than this. Nor is the Kingdom of God to be conceived, as some conceive it, as a reign of love in international and personal relationships, brought about by the coming of Jesus in a spiritual sense into the believer's heart. This is to water down Bible teaching until it is tasteless and useless, and still put the Coming of the Kingdom in the historical future. Barth protests against all such views. 'My Kingdom is not from hence' said Jesus. 'My kingdom is not of this world' (John xviii. 36) i.e., it is not to be thought of as a Kingdom in any earthly, temporal or historical sense.

There are two Ages, teaches Barth, the Present or Passing Age, and the Coming Age. These stand one over against the other. There is firstly, the known and seen world of space and time, of things and men, of nature and history, the world of Eros and desire, of transiency and death. There is also the coming world, the world of God and eternity, which is the beginning and end. It is this eternal world and age which at certain points breaks into the world of time and history. It has been breaking through from the dawn of history, as God has spoken unto men and guided the affairs of the world. In Jesus Christ, the incarnate Word of God, this coming age has broken through completely into this earth-world. The new age is here. It is pressing in. Abraham saw it and rejoiced. Paul and the apostles stood on the brink of it and saw it at hand. Whenever the Word of God comes with power, there the Kingdom of God comes, whether it be with the power of grace or that of judgement.

We as human beings, are wanderers between these

two ages and worlds. We come out from eternity, from beyond human temporal history, and now we are passing through this present world and age, to the world of eternity that is beyond and yet not beyond. Once we grasp Barth's distinction between Time and Eternity, the Present Age and the Coming Age, man and God, then we can understand what is meant by the Kingdom of God. It is because this distinction is not clearly grasped that even so eminent a scholar as Dean Inge of St. Paul's Cathedral speaks of the coming of the Kingdom and the Advent of Christ as 'a bit of Jewish old clothes from mythology'. Others have been led to believe that the apostles were deceived in their expectation of the return of Christ and the Coming of the Kingdom. Some have even dared to suggest that Jesus also deceived Himself when He spoke of His return and the coming of the Kingdom. All such views are due to a confounding of time and eternity. We live in time, we are immersed in it, but at intervals, the eternal world breaks in upon us, time stands still, the Moment has arrived, past and future are gone, we stand in eternity, face to face with God and His glory.

Finally, we await with hope the great Moment when our redemption shall appear. This is not a moment in time but in eternity. The coming of Christ and His Kingdom cannot be delayed, because 'delayed' means coming in time. It is our awaking that is delayed. 'Now is it high time to awake out of sleep. The night is far spent, the Day, i.e., the day of the coming of Christ and His Kingdom, is at hand' (Rom. xiii. 12). We stand therefore in our lives, on the frontier of time, on the brink of eternity, where time and eternity meet. There is the Kingdom of which the Christian is a citizen, even though at the same time, viewed from below, he is but a pilgrim still upon his journey.

## CHAPTER VI

### CHRISTIANITY AND THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

THE three great marks of the Christian life, according to Barth and his followers are : (1) By Grace alone ; (2) By Faith alone ; (3) to the Glory of God alone.

If we are asked to define what the Christian life is, we must say that primarily and fundamentally, in its true and proper sense, the Christian life is something which we as men, and even as Christians, do not and cannot live. ‘A different person altogether lives this Christian life—God in Jesus Christ through His Holy Spirit, for us and in us’ says Barth. Therefore, whenever we ask about the Christian life, or discuss it in any way, whether our Christian life or that of others, we must again and again forcibly remind ourselves that we are asking about and talking about something that is not done by us, but about something that God has done, does and will do. The ‘Christian’ is that in us which is not ourselves i.e., as men. It is the Spirit of God within us fighting the proud hostile spirit of man. The spirit of man is for ever seeking, consciously or unconsciously, to become as God, to build a tower of Babel unto heaven. God upon the other hand, will have man to know his creatureliness. God is God and Man is Man. Therefore, we must sharply differentiate between God’s work and man’s work, the one, absolute, eternal, free and of life; the other, relative, temporal, bound, limited and of death. In thinking of the Christian life, we must continually remember that we are thinking of a life lived by God through Christ in us, and not a life lived by man, either by himself, or with the help of anyone outside.

Let us therefore consider the various stages of this Way of the Christian Life.

(i) THE CHRISTIAN LIFE BEGINS BY GRACE THROUGH FAITH

When the Word of God comes to us, it comes firstly as a Word of Grace, and not of merit. It is not because of anything that God sees in anyone of us, that He comes to us in His Word. In His sight, we are all mortals, good and bad alike. We are all under the condemnation of sin, and under the limitation of our humanness and creatureliness. We are all on the way to death. No works that we can do, no merit that we can earn, no sacrifice that we can perform, no worship that we can offer, can suffice to bring God to us. It is solely of His Grace and Favour that He comes.

'Grace' says Barth 'is the royal and sovereign power of God. Grace means neither that men can or ought to do something, nor that they can or ought to do nothing. Grace means that God does something. Grace is the very opposite of human possibility. It lies beyond all human possibility. Grace is not something which a man has in himself. It is that which God has in him.'

Grace is thus a gift of God, yet unpossessed by man as separate from God. To be 'in grace' or 'under grace' is not in any way to be understood as an experience of the human soul, even of the religious soul. It is never of man, always of God. Grace, moreover, is opposed not only to human merit, but also to human experience, to human knowledge, to human piety, and to all human possibilities, even that of religion. It is of God and of God alone. It is by this grace that we are saved through faith.

By grace, the Word of God meets us individually in the Krisis. This meeting of man and God presupposes the Cross and the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. Because Christ died for us and rose again, it is possible for us to die and rise again in the Krisis.

When the Word of God in the Krisis judges and condemns us, and summons us to yield to God, man's response to that summons is what Barth means by Faith. Faith is man's answer to the Word of God in the Krisis. It is a human impossibility which God makes a possibility. God calls to us in His Word, and at the same time, gives us the power to respond. This response is faith, and is thus also the gift of God. It is a venture by which we trust the truth of the Word, not because we are courageous, not because we are ready to try it out, but because we cannot do otherwise under the constraint of the Word. Christian faith is personal decision which answers God's challenge. This faith carries within itself its own certainty and does not admit of support by proof. It is a venture and not the outcome of any proof. 'Trusting God' says one friend of Barth 'is to be alone in a great sea with 70,000 fathoms under one'. Barth himself says 'Faith is a desperate clinging to a rope over a precipice. Faith is a leap into the void, into the unknown, into empty air. Faith is an empty shell-hole, a cavity, a vacuum which can only be filled by God'. Quoting the Chinese Philosopher, Lao-Tso, Barth says in another place 'Faith is the axle-hole in the cartwheel'.

Once this leap of faith is made, the Christian life begins. This faith is an absolutely solitary thing. God calls, and the individual answers Yes. This Yes is not based upon any experience of the soul, nor upon any result of human reasoning, nor upon any religious piety. It is based on nothing connected with this world of time and things and men. In the Krisis, man stands face to face with God and hears His Word. Christian faith is based upon this Word from eternity and upon nothing else. Three things follow :

(1) He becomes a new man, living not by his own striving but by the indwelling of God. He no longer claims to be a self-illuminated star, shining by his own

light, but he becomes as it were a planet whose light is but a reflection of some other and greater.

(2) God counts him now as a Son, and no longer stands over him with the demand of the law which he could not satisfy. God has accepted for him the satisfaction made for him by Christ on the Cross.

(3) He begins a new relationship with his neighbour. His life is turned round and love for God is seen also as love for man.

We must now consider the question of Justification and Sanctification, which lie at the beginning of the Christian life. 'At the same time that a man is justified, he is also sanctified, and enters upon a life of obedience' says Barth. Faith issues in Justification. Obedience issues in Sanctification. This act of obedience is not made by man once for all, but must over and again be repeated, as he pursues the way of the Christian life. Justification means 'to be declared just or righteous'. Sanctification means 'to be declared holy or belonging to God'. They are therefore two sides of one act of God upon men. It is one and the same voice which says 'Thy sins be forgiven thee' (Justification) and 'Take up thy bed and walk' (Sanctification). The working of Divine grace seen from above is Justification, seen from below is Sanctification.

Justification is the eternal side of the work of God's love for sinners. It is simple, pure, complete, uttered not in time but in eternity. Sanctification is the temporal side of the same work, many-sided, incomplete, relative in time and in this world of time and things. In Justification, God says to the sinner 'Live'. In Sanctification, God says to the sinner 'Die'. The Christian life is not a second storey built on to the ordinary human life. It is death to all human striving after righteousness, death to human selfishness and pride, death to human religion and to every human possibility.

What then must man do? He has no share in his

justification. Has he no share either in his sanctification? No, says Barth. 'Emphatically No'. All that man can do is to believe and obey. Even the very power of these acts of faith and obedience is not a power of man as man, but a power of God. It is not *my* faith, *my* obedience, *my* work, which justifies and sanctifies. It is God's 'Yes' to me, God's claim over me, that justifies and sanctifies. God has mercy upon us as sinners, but at the same time asserts His rights over us as God.

Justification and Sanctification, then, are not the goal of the journey of the Christian life, but the beginning, the starting point. Having learned this, a man is delivered from all anxious striving to be something which he is not. He knows that man is man, and God is God.

#### (2) THE CHRISTIAN LIFE CONTINUES AMIDST PROBLEMS AS A WAY OF OBEDIENCE UNDER THE YOKE OF AUTHORITY

The Christian life, once started, goes on as a life of obedience to the Word of God. From the Barthian standpoint, it is impossible to lay down general rules to cover the behaviour of the Christian man. He lives in a state of uncertainty in the face of what will meet him from day to day. 'We know not what a day may bring forth' (Proverbs xxvii. 1). Barth says 'We are ever walking on the knife-edge ridge, and can only go forward with a yawning chasm on either side'. The Christian man must make a decision day by day as the Word of God meets him, and every decision must be a new decision. It is by these decisions that the Christian life grows or decays. How then shall the Christian man make these decisions, What shall his standard be?

##### (1) SHALL IT BE THE BIBLE?

But the Bible does not give definite guidance on many of the questions which we have to decide from

day to day. Even the Ten Commandments and the Sermon on the Mount help us only to a limited extent.

### (2) SHALL IT BE HUMAN EXPERIENCE OR REASON?

But we have already seen that these have no absolute authority. They are relative and changing, and can give us no standard by which to make decisions that make or mar the life of Christ within us.

### (3) SHALL IT BE CONSCIENCE?

But the conscience of man is but a broken, confused echo of the voice of God at the best of times, because of sin, so that what is apparently heard can in no wise be taken as the directing voice of God at all times.

What then shall our guide and standard be?

### (4) THE ONLY GUIDE AND STANDARD TO MAN IN THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IS THE WORD OF GOD

This alone to the Christian man comes with the authority of God to him. To the Word of God alone must he be subject and obedient. By this standard alone must he make his decisions. We have therefore to ask 'How does the Word of God come as the guide and standard for the Christian life?'

#### *(a) It comes as a concrete command*

The Word of God in the Christian life does not come as a general truth, applicable in every situation, but as a particular command under the particular set of circumstances of the individual at the time. Jesus said to the rich young ruler (Luke xviii. 20). 'You know the commandments' i.e., general commandments for all people in all circumstances. 'Yes, but what lack I yet?' he replies, i.e., general commandments are not enough. 'Go, sell all that thou hast, and give to the poor' said Jesus, i.e., a particular command for a particular man for his particular circumstances. The command of God in His Word is always thus. It is the expression of the living, personal will of God for

the individual. To discover that will as it affects me, and to be fully obedient to it from day to day, is for me the Christian life. The way of the Christian life is thus a way of obedience to this or that concrete command as it comes to me through the Word of God.

(b) *It comes as the Word of the Moment*

The Word of God does not make known to the Christian man in detail what he has to do some long time ahead. It reveals what he has to do here and now. 'Go to now, ye that say, today or tomorrow we will go into such a city and continue there a year and buy and sell and get gain.... For that ye ought to say, if the Lord will, we shall live and do this or that' (James iv. 13-15). Nor again can the Christian man live on the Word of God that may have come to him previously. Yesterday's word is no good for today, even as the manna gathered by the Israelites one day was useless if kept for the next. When the time for decision comes, then and then only does the Word of God speak to a man. To be ready for that Word, to expect that it will come, and to be ready, whatever that word may be, to be obedient to it, that is the Christian life.

(c) *It comes as a Word addressed to the Individual*

The Word of God in the Christian life does not call all men alike in the same way to the same tasks. It calls each man individually, and to each man something different. The Word of God to one man at one place at one time, is not necessarily the Word of God to another man at another place at another time. Each man stands under the special claim of God and God guides each life according to His will. 'If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? Follow thou me.' (John xxi. 22). To be obedient and accept in its entirety the will of God revealed to me through

the Word day by day, in the changing circumstances of my life, that for me is the Christian life.

The whole Christian life, therefore, from the human standpoint, is seen to be primarily a life of obedience. Jesus always stressed obedience as the cardinal virtue of the Christian life. In the parable of the labourers in the vineyard (Matthew xx. 1) 'some were sent out early in the morning and went. Others at midday, others again later in the afternoon, and they all went. When they were paid, they were all paid equally. Why? Because they were paid not according to the work that they had done, but according to their obedience, which was equal.'

There is however, one great danger in the Christian life of which we have to beware. We must never set our activity, even our activity in obedience to the Word of God, alongside of God's activity. Man may be the servant of God in word and work, but his word and work still remain human word and work for which man is responsible and not God. God is depending not upon our work but upon our obedience. We must also beware of setting our human righteousness alongside of the righteousness of God. The righteousness which saves is God's righteousness and not man's. Neither must we think that it is partly God's righteousness and partly man's which saves. It is wholly God's righteousness which saves and justifies through faith, as we see in the story of the thief dying on the Cross with Christ. The relation between the righteousness of God and the righteousness of man may be compared to a tree and the reflection of that tree in water. The one is real, the other is apparent, and yet there is a connexion between the two. If there were no tree, there could be no reflection of it. The real and only true righteousness is God's. Man's righteousness is only a reflection of it in this world of time, and is clear or distorted, according to whether a man is obedient or disobedient to the Word of God.

A clear reflection can only be seen in still water. 'Be still and know that I am God.'

Moreover, the power of God in human life is not some power added on to or mixed with the power of man. It is when man sees that his own power is totally unavailing, and when he yields to the power of God alone, that he becomes strong. God's strength is made perfect in man's weakness. (2 Cor. xii. 9). No man, not even the best Christian man, is ever a co-partner on equal terms with God. If it were so, then the door is left open for all the pride of works and human merit to come sweeping back in again. If God has no hands but our hands, no feet but our feet, no voice but our voice, as some say, then we become as gods. In fact we become greater than God for He becomes dependent upon us. I Cor. iii. 9 is sometimes used to support the claim of co-partnership with God. 'For we are labourers together with God' (Authorised version). This is however a false translation of what St. Paul wrote. The true translation is 'We labour together in God's service' (Moffat).<sup>1</sup>

Though we have stressed above that the Christian life is a life of continual obedience to the commands of God, yet such a life is not one just lived under law, as a slave lives under his owner. The Christian life is based upon the covenant that God has offered us in Jesus Christ and which we have gladly accepted. It is because of that covenant that we obey, knowing that

<sup>1</sup> The other text sometimes used to support this idea of co-workmanship with God is 2 Corinthians vi. 1. Here however, the Authorised Version and even Dr. Moffat's translation appear to be in error. 'We then as workers together with him' (Authorised Version) 'I appeal to you too, as a worker with God' (Moffat). In fact, the word 'God' does not appear in the Greek text, nor is it necessarily to be understood. The literal Greek reads 'We too as workers together', the reference being to human co-operation. This is a good illustration of how even the translation of the Scriptures is affected by generally accepted doctrines.—Author.

God's will toward us is a will of perfect love, and that our life is bound up in our obedience. The Christian life is thus one of happiness, peace, hope and blessedness. Though it is lived under the shadow of the Cross where we dimly perceive the unknowable love of God, it is also lived with the light of the Resurrection before us, where the illimitable power of God is revealed. It is thus lived in hope, under the promise of our final redemption.

### (3) THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IS COMPLETED IN REDEMPTION

'We are saved by hope' (Rom. viii. 24) says the apostle Paul, and a strong note of hope runs all through the Barthian Theology. We live by faith and not by sight, therefore we live by hope, the hope of our final redemption. This redemption is not seen now, for it does not lie within this world of time and things. It lies in the other world, of God, on the other side of death. It is seen by faith only, faith in the promise of the Word of God. Its fulfilment is not yet, so that the believer awaits it in hope. He is justified, sanctified and reconciled, but not yet redeemed. His redemption lies in the coming of Jesus, which however, is not an historical event to be looked forward to, as coming in the future history of the world, but a breaking in of the eternal world of God, in a New Day. This Day has not yet dawned, but it is at hand. We see it, but we see it only in promise, and therefore await it in hope. This hope is the life-blood of the Christian life, and by it, the Christian refuses to call himself a citizen of this world, but a citizen of the world to come. It is by this hope that the Christian man endures the tribulations of this world as 'seeing Him who is invisible' (Hebrews xi. 27). 'Eye hath not seen nor ear heard' what awaits the Christian man

beyond the gate of death, in the New Day and the New World.

Here in this world, he is a wanderer between the two ages, having no certain dwelling place. But as the end of his pilgrimage, he looks for 'a city not made with hands which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God' (Hebrews xi. 10).

## CHAPTER VII

### CHRISTIANITY AND FOREIGN MISSIONS

How do Foreign Missions stand in relation to the Barthian Theology? What has Barth to say about Foreign Missionary enterprise as at present being carried on by the Western Church? This will be the subject of our concluding chapter.

Barth, as we have already seen, believes that the Western Church of the 19th and 20th centuries has not been altogether true to its calling. It has failed to realise itself as a Church of the Word of God, and as a Church of Sinners. It is true that it has started and carried on a great missionary enterprise in the East, and as far as can be seen with the human eye, with considerable success. But to what extent is the message which the Western Church is proclaiming to the East, the true Word of God? Has it not tended to become a message of the Church and thus of Man? To what extent do the Western Churches look down upon the Eastern races, so that their message becomes based upon their superior attainments in religion and morals and government? Has not the message of the Western Church become a mere message of Religion, that is, of Christianity as the best amongst world religions? Has there not been pride in the Western Church, in opening up to the heathen the benefits of western civilisation? In the light of the Word of God, Barth sees that to a large extent, the Foreign Missionary enterprise of the Western Church is judged and condemned.

Barth, however, does not condemn true Christian Missions. On the contrary, missionary effort is its very life, he maintains. 'If the Church has heard the Word of God, then it has a mission, something to say which man must hear, and it cannot be silent' says Barth.

Brunner also agrees 'Where there is no mission there is no Church. The divine remedy must be made accessible to all' he says.

### (1) WHAT THEN MUST BE THE MOTIVE AND AIM OF MISSIONS?

The aim must be to make known the Gospel of Jesus Christ, to bring men to a saving knowledge of God in Him. It must not be to spread Christianity as a new and superior form of culture and civilisation. It must not be to bring in a Kingdom of God upon earth, as a golden age to be brought about by the efforts of man. It must not be to spread certain doctrines of some particular section of the Church, in rivalry to the doctrine of some other sect. It must not be just to help remove social and political injustices and evils, nor to demonstrate a kind of compassion and friendliness based upon a superior well-being.

It must be realised, that in spite of superior civilisation and culture, all men alike are under the judgement of God. There is in His sight no superiority of West over East, of Modern over Ancient, of Christian over Pagan. All are mortals separated from God by sin. To change the circumstances of a man's life, to promote his social well-being, to raise the level of his culture, to change him from one religion to another, cannot therefore be the aim of Christian Missions. The Christian Church must undertake Missions as the proclamation of the Word of God, which condemn him that proclaims it and him that hears it, which places them both in the Krisis, and offers to both on equal terms the grace of God in Jesus Christ.

### (2) WHAT IS THE CALL OF THE MISSIONARY?

The call of the Missionary is to be the servant of the Word of God. He is to be a messenger, one sent,

proclaiming what God commands him to proclaim. He is not to be concerned with what he himself wants to say, or what he thinks ought to be said. He is to be concerned primarily with what God is wanting to say through him. He is not primarily the servant of the Church or of any Society but of God.

The missionary must be one who himself has heard the Word of God, so that he can witness to it. He must have passed through the Krisis himself so that he can lead others to it. He preaches to others, not as being better than they, but as one with them, as one who has received a divine commission which he must fulfil. He becomes one of the band of whom Christ spake 'As the Father has sent me, so I send you' and 'Ye shall be witnesses unto me unto the uttermost part of the earth.' He must be called and ordained as a missionary, even as the twelve were called and ordained by Christ. Without this personal calling, there is no divine commission.

### (3) WHAT MUST BE THE MESSAGE OF THE MISSIONARY?

The message is the proclamation of the Word of God, the Christian Revelation, the Gospel of Christ. He proclaims that man is man and God is God, that man by his own efforts cannot rise to God, that all his proud efforts to build a tower of Babel reaching to the heavens are in vain, and give cause only to make manifest the wrath of God, that God has come down to men in Jesus Christ, the incarnate Word, who alone is the Mediator between God and man. The missionary must also proclaim in obedience to the Word of God, that all man's efforts to achieve his own righteousness, by merit, sacrifice or piety, are in vain, that by faith alone can the divine righteousness be imputed to man. He must proclaim the Coming World, the New Age and the Day of Redemption, and exhort men everywhere to repentance and obedience to God in His Word.

This message, the missionary will find, will provoke opposition from all human religions, because it states the impossibility of all religions. It denounces the pride of man which is the root sin of all, and therefore, the missionary will be opposed. But he must not adapt his message so as to do away with this opposition, for this is to cause the 'offence of the Cross' to cease. He must not make friends with other religions and assimilate their message to his. He must realise that his message is God's message, which comes with the authority of God, and not with the changing authority of the Church, or of human wisdom, or of western civilisation.

#### (4) WHAT THEN MUST BE THE METHOD OF THE MISSIONARY?

The method of the missionary may be adapted to the kind of people to whom he is sent, but the message itself must not be changed. He may preach by word of mouth, he may distribute the scriptures, he may administer the sacraments, he may use any or all of the human means by which the Word of God comes to men. But in all his methods, he must look for God's Word to come to men through his proclamation. He must realise over and over again his own weakness and nothingness and rely wholly upon God. He must be humble, knowing himself to be in the Krisis under judgement. He must realise his own uselessness and look to God to use him. In so far as he may use secondary methods, such as education, medical relief, rural reconstruction and social uplift work, he must be on his guard lest these become ends in themselves, and not channels of the coming of the Word of God. There can be but one test of missionary method. Does the Word of God come to men through it? All missionary work must be continually tested by this standard.

The great danger to missionary enterprise at the present day arises out of the lack of clear distinction between Christianity and world religions. This we discussed in our first chapter. If Christianity is preached only as the highest peak in the range of hills called 'Religion', then Christian missions must fail. Christ is the end and death of all world religions however much of moral truth and religious piety they may contain. They must all come to the Krisis and be judged.

The missionary must seek, as Zinzendorf says, 'to gain souls for the Lamb' to bring men into unconditioned discipleship to Christ. Not only so, but they must be built up together into the Church of Christ, saved from the loneliness of heathendom, saved to corporate love and service of their neighbours, looking forward to the Coming Kingdom.

The whole missionary enterprise, therefore, must be one of faith as hope, looking for the coming in of the new world from beyond, by the activity of God. This faith is also obedience, as service to the Word of God in this passing age, until the New Age of promise dawns.

## CONCLUSION

In closing this book, I would again remind the reader that it is only an attempt to introduce some of the thoughts and teaching of Karl Barth and not in any way intended to be a full survey or criticism of his theology. Moreover, even this exposition is coloured by my own meditations and experience of God in His Word. Many passages will no doubt be found difficult, and many statements may be challenged, but the trend of the theology should be clear. It is loyal to the great Reformers and the central tradition of the Christian Church from its earliest days. It is neither

Fundamentalist nor Modernist but transcends both. If then this attempt should in any way help anyone to a better understanding of the Word of God, of the Christian religion and of the Christian life, I shall be satisfied. To God alone be glory.

If this book should meet with any measure of approval and be found to fill in some measure a need, it would be necessary to continue the study of Barthian theology by a study of its message in relation to the various religions of India. More especially would it be necessary to consider the presentation of the Christian message in relation to :

(1) The outcastes and those who worship the village gods and goddesses of popular Hinduism.

(2) The orthodox caste Hindu with his allegiance to the Vedas and the Dharma Sastras. Also to the Sanatanists.

(3) The unorthodox Hindu infused with Western ideas of progress. Also the Arya Samajists and Theosophists.

(4) The Mohammedans.

(5) The Buddhists.

It would also be necessary to investigate more fully the Barthian attitude towards the great non-religious systems whose message and influence is being heard and felt in India in ever-increasing measure. These include Secularism, Materialism, Communism, Fascism, Hitlerism, Americanism. This investigation therefore awaits us in the future.

## APPENDIX

### LIST OF SOME BOOKS IN ENGLISH DEALING WITH THE BARTHIAN THEOLOGY

1. *Word of God and the Word of Man* ... ... Karl Barth
2. *The Christian Life* ... ... "
3. *The Resurrection of the Dead* ... ... "
4. *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* ... ... "
5. *Theological Existence Today* ... ... "
6. *Come Holy Spirit* ... ... Karl Barth and Edward Thurneysen.
7. *The Theology of Crisis* ... ... Emil Brunner
8. *The Word and the World* ... ... "
9. *The Mediator* ... ... "
10. *The Significance of Karl Barth* ... ... John McConnachie.
11. *The Barthian Theology and the Man of Today* ... ... "
12. *The Teaching of Karl Barth* ... ... Birch Hoyle.
13. *The Message of Karl Barth* ... ... W. C. Hanson.
14. *Karl Barth and Christian Unity* ... ... Adolf Koller.
15. *Revelation and the Holy Spirit* ... ... Dr. Camfield.
16. *The Theology of Crisis* ... ... Dr. Lowrie.
17. *International Review of Missions April 1931. The Theology of the Word and Missions* ... ... K. Hartenstein.
18. *Theology of Karl Barth* ... ... J. Arundel Chapman.

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